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SOME SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN MIDNAPUR, WEST BENGAL

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MIDNAPUR is a large district with a population of 3,359,022 among whom Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes number 482,793 (14.37%) and 212,525 (6.33%) respectively. There are altogether 31 scheduled castes as recorded in the Census Report of 1951, out of which, six castes, namely (1) Paundra Kshatriya or Pod, (2) Namasudra, (3) Rajbansi, (4) Hari, (5) Dom, and (6) Muchi have been dealt with in this paper. Besides these six groups, another small group of people called Patidar or Chitrakar have been brought within our compass of study. They stand between Hindus and Muslims in respect of social status and religious life. Lodhas, an ex-criminal or de-notified tribe have been also included. Now they are treated as one of the tribal groups of West Bengal. Attempts have been made to study the trends of change among these castes over a period of roughly fifty years.

Informants belonging to various age-groups as well as people of other castes, were approached for verification of the

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statemets that might have been biased by sectional interests. Published news, periodicals and books dealing with the problems affecting them were also consulted.

PEOPLE AND AREAS OF INVESTIGATION

Name of the caste	Total No. in the district	Approx. number inter-viewed	Name of the village	Police Station
Faundra	37,770	30	Kalipur	Sutahata
Kshatriya or Pod		50	Bhanganmari	Khedgree
		100	Amdabad	Nandigram
Namasudra	38,743	8	Chatradari	Tamluk
		27	Bichitrapur	Keshiari
		22	Barachira	Nandigram
Rajbansi	51,684	25	Rania	Ramnagar
		40	Sutahata	Sutahata
		70	Purba Dakshin Moyna	Moyna
Hari	14,648	26	Krishnanagar	Nandigram
		16	Purba Dakshin Moyna	Moyna
Muchi	8,497	4	Amdabad	Nandigram
		6	Purba Dakshin Moyna	Moyna
Dom	12,850	6	Mirzapur	Tamluk
		8	Jogikhop	Tamluk
		12	Kuldiha	Nayagram
Chitrakar or Patidar		12	Kumirmara-Amdabad	Nandigram
		14	Keshabpur	Sutahata
Lodha	6,040	40	Kukai	Keshiari
		30	Birkar	Narayangarh
		20	Kadamdiha	Nayagram

Names used in the following account are fictitious. There may, of course, be accidental coincidences.

Village

Almost all villages in Midnapur are dependent on agriculture. Most of the people are either agriculturists owning land or work as agricultural labourer for others as sharecroppers. The western part of Midnapur is extensively covered by jungle and rocks, and so cultivation can only be done when water accumulates in the terraced fields during rains. At other times, this area is practically dry and unfit for cultivation. Many of the villages of Keshiari and Nayagram Police Stations surveyed belong to this category, while the rest in Ramnagar, Khedgree, Nandigram, Satahata and Moyna possess fields of the 'low-land' type. Floods and cyclones afflict this area occasionally and cause grave damage to crops. In the west, villages are small, thinly populated and situated on high ground in undulating land. In the south-eastern part, the lay-out of the villages slightly differs. They have a linear arrangement, i.e. long roads run through the vast paddy fields in different directions and huts are built on either sides of the road. Kitchen gardens are made by raising the low paddy fields with earth. When a family splits up, the migrant members shift for themselves and construct a new hut at some distance or within the same compound if there is space. In the former case, they raise a part of the paddy field and build a new home there.

In the villages, members of particular castes prefer to build huts close to neighbours who belong to the same caste. This is a prevailing characteristic of the people throughout the district.

Building materials used in construction differ widely from those used in earlier times. Most of the mud-walled houses are now thatched with tiles or corrugated iron sheets instead of straw. Of course, poorer people still use straw.

There are, without exception, some sanctuaries in every village and these are dedicated to different deities like Siva (rather rare), Sitala (very common and even individuals sometimes erect a shrine of mud-built walls, thatches of straw or tiled roof), Olabibi, Satyapeer, Basuli, Kaluraya,

etc. and Baram in jungle areas. Many a festival is held in these temples and people, irrespective of caste, participate in them. Now-a-days scheduled castes have established some shrines of their own where they gather to discuss their communal problems. Previously, these communities were deprived of the service of Brahman priest, Washerman and Barber in social and religious affairs. They were not even allowed to enter temples or worship deities. Now these disabilities have been removed by law. The changes in this regard that have gradually taken place have been recorded in this paper.

Inter-dining or general feasts associated with marriage, funeral or festive occasions are important features of community life in a village. People arrange such feasts according to their means and generally invite villagers of the same caste. Sometimes, on a major festive occasion, invitation is extended to people of the same caste living in other villages. Brahmans are also invited, but they usually take sweets, puffed rice (k h a i) and at the end of the feast, are presented with a small gift in cash. Scheduled castes are generally not invited to such feasts. But on special occasions, in case of a cordial relationship between a member of a higher caste and a member of a scheduled caste, the latter is invited to a feast, seated separately and fed on a leaf-plate instead of a metal-plate. Washermen or other scheduled castes who offer their services during such occasions, also participate in such feasts, but have to sit in a separate row after higher castes have been entertained. They have also to remove the dining leaves after meals (metal-plates are not supplied generally) and even mop up the place of dining with cowdung solution for cleaning it ceremonially.

People of the locality belonging to the Hari, Muchi, Dom, Paundra and Behara castes, also assemble on such occasions without formal invitation. Sometimes such feasts are announced by beat of drum in the market place and a general invitation is extended to all. Those who come are generally treated like beggars and feted together, irrespective of caste, by the host. But these beggars, however, sit in separate rows

according to their social status or caste apart from others. That is, they try to maintain their prestige and distinction even in such feasts. After the feast, each of them is given a pice or two by way of present, this being known as *kāṅgāli vidāya*.

This traditional manner of inter-dining has changed into unrestricted communal feasts through the earnest endeavours of a few upper caste well-to-do persons and social reformers who have been trying to break the barriers of caste. The scheduled caste people raised a strong voice in many places in this district against caste discrimination under the leadership of such social workers as J. N. Bhowmick (Mahisya by caste) of Amdabad who has been one of the pioneers since 1903 when he was a mere school-boy. Braja Mohan Das, Paundra by caste, was the teacher of his school. His wife was fond of the boy and used frequently to offer Bhowmick puffed rice and coco-nut etc. After some months, one day she served Bhowmick with cooked rice and curry. This acceptance by a member of a higher caste of rice from a lower caste was considered a revolutionary incident and the news spread like wild fire. When the news reached the ears of leaders of the village like Janaki Nath Panda, Chandra Dinda, Jagadish Bhatta-charya, they urged the boy to perform a purificatory ceremony or *Chandrayan* including shaving of the head and giving generous gifts to local Brahmans. Sri Bhowmick performed this ceremony according to the direction of the village elders.

Paundra of that locality helplessly suffered this sort of humiliation without protest. Sri Bhowmick had to pay fine several times later to his caste panchayat for breaking established rules. A few examples of his 'misdeeds' are cited below.

Once he worked with a Karanga (scheduled caste) to level a furrowed land while standing on the same leveller with him. This had to be done as the man had two bullocks, young and untrained, harnessed for the first time for agricultural purposes; and being very poor himself, he could not employ hired labour to help him. As a result, Sri Bhowmick had to pay Rs. 4

as fine for violation of caste traditions. Again, in the year 1918, once he took his meal publicly at Gopal Sit's place who was a Washerman by caste. Then he had again to pay a fine of Rs. 8. There are quite a few instances of his attempts at breaking social customs.

Offering of hookah was an important form of reception in the rural area of Midnapur. Anybody, on arrival, must be supplied with a hookah if he belonged to the Navasākha group. To the scheduled castes, however, only a *kalki* (earthen pipe for smoking, placed on the top of the hookah) was supplied. A well-to-do person generally kept a few separate hookahs reserved for each caste. But now-a-days this custom has been totally given up as will be evidenced from several examples cited in this paper. Now communal worships and feasts, worship of the goddess Saraswati with the distribution of *Khichri* (rice and pulse boiled together with spices) to students of all castes belonging to a school have almost broken down the older traditional pattern of common feasts. Again, major natural calamities like the last two cyclones, famines, etc. have also brought distressed persons close together, for they had to live on doles and relief given by relief organizations in which caste distinctions are neither encouraged nor tolerated. In this way, caste restrictions and prejudices have weakened to an appreciable extent during the last few decades. Apart from food, there were restrictions in regard to sitting arrangements made in public functions or festivals. Scheduled castes had special seats allotted for them. In the year 1920, a *Jātrā* (theatrical) performance was arranged by a local zemindar of Subdi, P. S. Nandigram. At that place the Paundras, Namasudras, Beharas, i.e., all scheduled caste members had separate sitting arrangements made for them. But this discrimination is hardly met with anywhere now-a-days.

In respect of supply of water for drinking and washing in a village rich and well-to-do persons used to dig large tanks and dedicated them for the community. It was the belief that by such an act they would earn merit. Thus the untouchables had free access to supplies of water as they were meant for

all and not for a particular caste. So far as middle class people are concerned, most of them have their private wells or tanks. But they do not allow members of scheduled castes or untouchables to use them.

Another important feature of change in the villages is that due to excessive pressure on cultivable land and its almost stationary yield, many persons of necessity are seeking employment in other places now or taking to petty trade. Thus, quite a number of tea stalls, groceries, stationery shops, tailoring shops, etc. have been opened in the area, and they belong to men of various castes indiscriminately.

The practice of untouchability has been further assailed by the fact that now, excepting for only a few well-to-do persons, all including untouchables have to have their shave from the common Barber who plies his trade at the market place. The wealthy have taken to the use of safety razors, which they use themselves. The same case is observed with the service of Washermen.

Previously, domestic servants were generally recruited from one's own caste or from the Navasākha groups from whom water was considered acceptable by higher castes. But due to the gradual rise in the wages of day labourers, most of them have discarded the previous profession of domestic service. So middle income group have now to employ many scheduled caste people, and even Muslims as domestic servants. Another notable change in the villages is the establishment and growth of many primary or secondary schools. These institutions offer employment to a sizable number of persons as teachers. Such teachers do their household work without the aid of servants. Besides, they carry on political propaganda on the basis of party affiliation and run public libraries or clubs which are now attracting more and more from among the semi-educated, cash-earning class.

Villages have their own panchayats in which the rich or higher castes dominate and are vested with the charge of maintaining peace and order in a village. Sometimes, they punish an offender not only by imposing fine but also by

excommunication or by an order of railing him in a public place. This custom has since been abolished as a result of popular condemnation fostered by local political parties after the attainment of Independence.

Paundra Kshatriya (formerly enumerated as Pod)

Paundra Kshatriyas are a cultivating caste, mainly concentrated in lower Bengal. According to Risely their social status is low. They are served in their religious and social affairs by degraded Brahmans.

They are mainly concentrated in the coastal area, specially in Sutahata, Mahisadal, Nandigram and Khedgree. Most of them belong to the landholding and agricultural labour groups. In these Police Stations, there are a few zemindars also. Being economically better off, they have taken advantage of modern education. They are also making a serious effort to raise themselves in social status through agitation and inter-caste conflicts.

At Kalipur, P. S. Sutahata, there are a few school teachers and highly educated and moneyed men of the Paundra caste. They had no Washerman and Barber to attend during social ceremonies before 1942, except one degraded Brahman who performed their religious ceremonies.

These castes are also very jealous of each other and sometimes conflicts break out among them on minor issues. A peculiar quarrel took place some twenty years ago in P. S. Sutahata among the Paundra Kshatriyas and the local Mahishyas. The story was related by Abinash Mandal of this caste, now aged 70, who started a sweetmeat shop in a fair at Guaberagram. Mahishyas, Mayaras and other higher caste people use to have such confectionery shops. On the third day of the fair, a serious clash took place with members of the two castes. As Abinash Babu was a rich man, he got the help of the local police quite easily and continued to run his shop in the fair in spite of opposition. But some high caste people set fire to his shop one day as a result of which it was burnt down. Since then, several new shops have been opened in the

area by people of 'lower' castes and Mahishyas or others do not dare to protest against this.

Widow remarriage was not formally approved by the Paundra. Once about 40 years ago at Kalipur strong objection was raised against S. H. who was found to have a widow as a concubine of the same caste without marrying her, in his own place. The matter was brought to the notice of the caste panchayat who found him guilty and fined Rs. 30 which was paid by him on the spot. Some time later he had a son born of this union and now that young man, after passing the matriculation examination, has been serving in a shop in a distant place.

Later on a section of this community began to support widow remarriage if the widow was of tender age. This move was immediately supported by many local political and social workers. One Lakshminarayan Haldar of the same village had a daughter who, became widow at the age of 14 shortly after marriage. Then Lakshmi Babu and some of his friends tried to arrange remarriage of that girl and fortunately one Abinash Haldar offered to marry her. Sri Nanin Majhi and Suren Majhi of the same community of the village Erekhali (in the same Police Station) protested against this and, as a result, the community became divided into two factions. Though this happened about 25 years ago, yet quarrels among these two groups occur frequently and inter-relationship in respect of marriage and dining do not exist among them at all.

These Paundra Kshatriyas have four sub-divisions, of which the Bangaja section is superior in social status and the Kholbhasa is inferior. There is inter-dining among these four groups but inter-marriage is strictly prohibited. The Haldar families of Kalipur were in favour of inter-marriage between these groups, though they themselves belong to the Bangaja section. This also gradually attracted the attention of other castes and later in 1942, just after the cyclone, a few philanthropic organizations like the Bharat Sevashram Sangha of Calcutta, the Hindu Mahasabha (Bengal Branch) etc. came forward to carry on social work in the locality. They carried

on propaganda against caste distinction in which they are now getting general support of the people belonging to all castes. They have also set up a few clubs and libraries in this area through which propaganda is actively continued.

Amdabad is a big village inhabited by many ethnic groups. There are a few *pārās* or wards inhabited by the Paundras. The Paundras of the village are very rich. In this village they have organized their own caste council which tries to settle disputes and looks after shrines for worship of various deities and also organizations and clubs for theatrical performances. For a pretty long time the Paundras were not served by Washermen in their social festivals. But they received the service of degraded Barbers and Brahmans exclusively for ceremonial purposes. A few decades ago they were not even allowed to sit with the upper caste people in any public function and were never entertained in a feast with others. But a few social workers like Sri J. N. Bhowmick of Amdabad and Sri P. C. Jana of Subdi of the same locality ventured to help them in fighting for their cause through social movements. Once Sri Bhowmick approached the late Harekrishna Das of the same village to arrange for a general feast against untouchability. He received full support of most of the educationists and political workers of this district when the political movement under the leadership of late B. N. Sasmal was in its full swing. Harekrishna Babu was a very rich man. It is said that he accumulated his fortune by agriculture. Harekrishna Babu being convinced by Sri J. N. Bhowmick agreed to his proposal of giving a general feast—an attempt at social unification at that time. In March 1933, a date was fixed for the great feast and for holding a public meeting under the presidentship of late Prof Upendra Nath Ball, who belong to the Brahmo Samaj. Congress workers along with Sri J. N. Bhowmick circulated pamphlets, addressed letters to the benevolent public in three adjacent Police Stations, Nandigram, Khedgree and Bhagyanpur, requesting their support and participation in this feast. Harekrishna Babu and his supporters met with serious resistance from local Brahmans, Mahisyas and Kamilas (Gold-smiths). The latter organized

meetings against this move in different villages under the leadership of Sri Panchanan Tarkaratna, Ananda Dinda, Abhoy Kamila, Jiban Kamila, etc. But they were scoffed at and ridiculed by the people who ultimately decided to ostracize them as they thought they were harming a noble cause. One Hara Giri even cut off all connection for life with his sister's family who supported Harekrishna Babu in this move. Supporters of Harekrishna Babu also arranged meetings in different places and appealed to the public to make this feast a success. At last when it came, about 15,000 people attended the mass meeting and at the end of it, 10,000 people belonging to all castes and communities participated in the general feast. The meeting was held with great enthusiasm and the people declared their determination to fight against untouchability. The prominent features of the feast were that—

(i) Scheduled caste people cooked the meals along with Brahmans and other higher castes.

(ii) There was no restriction on their distributing food to the guests.

(iii) Invitees belonging to all castes took their seats in a single row and at the end of the feast all of them, irrespective of caste threw away the leaves on which food had been served.

Quite recently, in 1953, when Harekrishna Babu died, his sons gave a ceremonial feast and most of the upper caste Hindus were invited and took their meals there.

This family has also a special zeal for higher education. They have great influence on the proper sections of the same group and others also.

Once in 1945, a Mahishya widow named Panchami wanted to worship Gauranga (the wooden image) of Subdi and arranged a great feast. The priests of the temple came with their Brahman cooks and prepared cooked rice and vegetable curries which were offered to the deity. After that this offering was distributed among the people who assembled there at about midnight. There were a few Paundra invitees. It was decided that the Paundra including the local High School teachers and young men would also be served with consecrated food. Brahman cooks however refused to serve them. Then

Sri A. Bhowmick, Headmaster of the High School, requested them repeatedly to serve and offered Rs. 25 to them as the purificatory expenditure if it were demanded to be performed by the other caste Hindu population. Yet the Brahmans refused to do so. Then all the young men including a few Paundra gentlemen, wanted to beat them with sticks and wooden logs and threatened to take possession of the Gauranga image forcibly. The Brahmans finally agreed to serve the Paundras with consecrated food along with upper caste Hindus who sat in the same row.

How these people react to the caste prejudices now is clear from an incident in which a local High School teacher of high caste was beaten by a young Paundra because he rebuked a Paundra student by using the obsolete term 'Pod'.

This community has so much advanced now in the political sphere that they won quite a number of Union Board seats on the ticket of the Congress. As is usual in such an arrangement in the Union of Amdabad, it was agreed between them that a Mahishya gentleman who was considered more capable should be elected as President of this 9-member Board. But quite surprisingly enough, ultimately one inefficient Paundra candidate was elected as the President with the support of the members of his caste.

It is apparent, therefore, that the rich as well as educated people among the scheduled castes are coming to the forefront of various social activities now-a-days.

Paundras have also their own caste organization and two monthly journals are regularly published which deal with their needs and problems. They are also making a united effort to fight against social injustice. The late Mahendra Nath Karan of Bhanganmari contributed much towards the movement by bringing all the down-trodden communities of a few districts under one banner. He published a large number a pamphlets and brochures propagating the cause and distributed them amongst the community members. His son Kaustav Kanti Karan was an M. L. A. elected to a reserved seat on Congress ticket.

Namasudra

According to Risely, they are a non-Aryan caste and engaged for the most part in plying boats. They are cheerful and hard-working cultivators.

Though most of them are landless, yet they earn good wages as day labourers. They do not accept any job under Leather-worker, Hari, Dom, etc. who are thought to be lower castes. They have degraded Brahmans to perform their ceremonies. They have their own panchayats which have an extremely limited jurisdiction covering a Police Station at the most. Social problems are dealt with by the panchayats and offenders are punished according to the nature of the offence. Some of Namasudras of Chatradari recently started betel-leaf cultivation and are making good profit. They rarely mix with other castes or participate in any social activities even though the latter may be of general interest. It is the same with the people of Barachira, P. S. Nandigram. But in Bichitrapur, under Keshiari P. S., they are more conscious and co-operative.

Before the Independence celebration of 1947, the scheduled castes of Keshiari did not enjoy any inter-dining privileges. One religious organization, namely, Suddha Bhakti Niketan under its chief preceptor Kishore Dev Goswami, is carrying on social work here, specially against untouchability. They have a caste panchayat of their own in the village as well as in the Pargana. It is incumbent upon individuals that they must obey the orders and directives passed by the joint sitting of the members of the panchayat of the Pargana. About 15 or 20 years ago, the village elders were stubbornly opposed to womenfolk going to market to sell vegetables or other articles. Once in the past, the widowed sister of Biku Bera went to the market of Keshiari along with Mahendra Pramanik of the same caste. This woman went to sell pumpkins. Lakshmi Giri, an influential man of Belma, a neighbouring village, protested against this and the panchayat was called. Biku's sister, Mahendra Pramanik and other villagers supporting them were fined by the panchayat.

It was a long-drawn dispute and the party did not ultimately pay the fine and instead formed a rival group of their own supporters with a separate Brahman priest and a Barber to serve them. However, a compromise was arrived at by these two groups later on.

Once the the panchayat decided to ban payment of bride-price in cash or in kind. Residents of a village also used to demand feasts on such occasions from both parties. This was also restricted to members of the caste only. A peculiar incident happened in 1948. On one occasion a marriageable bride for a groom became scarce at Asanda under Narayangarh P.S. Then a middleman appeared on the scene who privately took Rs. 200 in cash for negotiating such a marriage and paid a share of it to the prospective bride's party to influence them to offer their daughter for the marriage. Following this, the marriage took place; but after the marriage, the bride was not sent with her husband by her parents. Then the bridegroom's party lodged a complaint before the panchayat. On investigation the whole affair was exposed and all the parties concerned were fined. This amount, when realized, was paid in cash to the funds of the local High School.

One P. S. P. candidate, Sri S. Pramanik, who is a Namasudra by caste was elected in the first general election in 1952 from the Keshiari-Narayangarh constituency. He personally approached most of his community members and inspired them to take better education and demand other social benefits.

In the village of Chatradanri the Namasudras try to live in seclusion. They rarely participate in any village or political upliftment work except those concerning their own caste problems or disputes. They did not encourage widow remarriage even some 40 or 45 years ago. But now-a-days they prefer this. The ceremony is attended by a degraded Brahman. They have no Washerman for ceremonial occasion except the Barber to serve them in such rituals. About 25 years ago one Mahishya gentleman named Satish Bhuiyay gave a feast in which the Namasudras of this village were

invited but they were made to sit separately. There they were slightly offended for some unknown reasons. Since then they do not work in the homes of local Mahishyas and refuse to take meals there. At present Namasudra boys also attend school in the same village and read with other students of the locality. The school is a Free Primary School aided by the District School Board.

In Barachia the Namasudras are termed as Khadal by the neighbouring higher caste communities. Though they have not launched any organized movement against social discriminations as yet, now-a-days they participate in many political and social affairs of the locality.

Rajbansi

They are fishermen by profession. But a few Rajbansis of Sutamata have some cultivable land. Rajbansis of Dakshinpurba-Moyna earn good wages by labour and almost all of them have well-built tiled huts. They recently (10-15 years ago) started a business of importing spawn of fresh-water fishes from the Subarnarekha or Kansabati rivers and selling them in the local markets. This is a very profitable trade and they have been able to raise themselves in status thereby. The Rajbansis of Moyna have their own village council as well as a caste panchayat. But they have no direct relationship with the Rajbansis of other Police Stations. Inter-Police Station or inter-District meetings are rarely convened, as in the case of Paundras.

Though limited in its scope of operation the panchayat locally called B ā i s i is more active in respect of implementing social reforms.

Once the zemindar of Moynagarh, Sri Herambananda Bahubalindra, and a local Congress worker arranged a general feast on their own initiative. The Rajbansis were invited and participated in it in a cordial spirit. A few other higher-caste groups resented this action. Now they are trying to secure more educational facilities.

The Rajbansis, throughout this district, in general, attempted to revise their surnames as evidenced in Sutamata,

Moyna and Ramnagar Police Stations. In Nandigram and Khedree too, where they live in comparative small numbers, they are also found to use new surnames. These are 'Barman' for 'Bar' as Barman is more aristocratic and used as a surname by the Kayasthas in Bengal and Assam. All the older generation even prefer to be called Barman instead of 'Bar'. Such is the case of the 'Bhuiyan', who want to be identified as 'Bhowmick'.

Rajbansis of Moyna Police Station tried to hold a *bāisi* or communal sitting for dealing with caste problems at Ismalichak High School on several occasions. There, one Sri Gayaram Barman of Sridharpur in the same Police Station, attempted his utmost to remove distinctions which exist within the caste itself. A few decades ago, widow remarriage was strictly forbidden among them. Anybody practising widow remarriage was ostracized and a fine was imposed upon him. But just after Independence they have relaxed this rule among themselves. Again after Independence they do not remove the dining plates after a feast given by a high caste person like Brahman or Mahishya.

There are altogether four clubs in this village where members of different castes assemble together and discuss various social problems. One named Milan Sangha and the other Jana Sevak Sangha are mainly concerned with amateur theatrical and dramatic performances. The third one, Kisore Sangha, is only interested in football and volley ball competitions and the fourth one Nabarun Sangha has organized a library and general sports. Year before last, the *bāisi* at Ismalichak High School decided not to take any bride price from the bridegroom's party which has so long been in vogue amongst them.

The Rajbansis of Sutamata are less organized and economically backward, except for one or two families who are well-to-do. Previously they were not allowed to be a co-sharer of a paddy field or to participate in ploughing or levelling. They were rarely invited to any village feast. Sri Kumar Chandra Jana, a political worker of repute of Sutamata, tried his best along with his followers to do away with the practice of untouch-

ability in this area during the thirties. Since that time, Rajbansis do not pick up the plates or leaves after eating in a communal feast. Now they are invited by higher castes also in general feasts but have their rows kept separate.

Widow remarriage has been in disfavour for the last 40-50 years. Thirtyfive years ago, one Sukhada, widowed sister of Kailash Bar of Sutahata was given in marriage. She was excommunicated along with her brother.

Some of their social problems are discussed in the caste panchayats and the panchayat has wide powers.

Marriage with a married woman who has not obtained a formal divorce is strictly forbidden by this community. Seven or eight years ago one M. daughter of I. B. of Sutahata was married to K. Bhakta of Chandipur. But strangely enough, M. did not go to her husband's house but expressed her desire to be married another man. The whole village assembled in panchayat and she was forced to go to her husband's place.

Some of the most influential villagers like Bhutnath Barman, Bankim Mantri, Kanai Mal, etc. decided in favour of giving marriage of the widows if they happened to be of tender age. But a widow with 3 or 4 children is strictly restrained from remarriage as was evidenced in the case of one Banshi Hazra of Itamagra who remarried the widow of the late Sukhi Jana having 4 children. The villagers ostracized Banshi and fined him Rs. 30. Banshi paid the fine in cash to the village panchayat. Now workers of the Arya Samaj and Bharat Sevashram Sangha are carrying on upliftment work amongst them and a Milan Mandir has been started at Sutahata through the initiative of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha and with direct monetary help of Sri Jyoti Prasad Guria, a Mahishya gentleman.

In the village of Rania under Ramnagar P. S., Rajbansis are facing a hard time now. Fishing in the adjacent sea is no longer profitable as fish have become scarce. Again, they have been cornered by some of the caste Hindu people who employ hired fishermen to catch fish for them. Their panchayat is not effective and powerful at all.

The Rajbansis of this village have very little co-operation with Rajbansis of other villages. Even they are not able to punish an offender. Widow remarriage is allowed and one Bhagirath enticed away the wife of one Ramani Bar to a distant place at Egra P. S. But the latter remained unpunished for a long time. At last one Mrityunjay Panchadhyayi, a Brahman by caste, helped that poor man to get back his wife.

Widow remarriage is allowed and divorce requires formal permission from village elders.

Hari

Haris suffer from many disabilities and are also extremely poor. Their main occupation is carrying persons in palanquins ; they also convey ceremonial presents during marriages with carrying poles on their shoulders and other festivals among higher castes. Then they have also to play on drums.

Their caste panchayat is very active. The neighbouring higher castes exploit this organization for their personal ends. One social worker named Prabhas Aditya Giri, Mahishya by caste, tried hard to improve the social and economic condition of the Haris of Krishnanagar. He started a Primary School in 1946 and a club thereafter. Some local moneyed men, like Ramanath Senapati, Milkman by caste, generally employed some of the Haris for their work on account of lower wages. The Haris under the direction of Sri Giri boycotted him in order to stop such exploitation.

Previously they used to attend local ceremonial feasts without formal invitation. Now they demand formal invitation on each occasion and do not remove the dining leaf-plates after the feast.

They have a strong community organization to discuss their social problems. But its activities are very limited. As they are extremely poor, they have to depend partly on the mercy of local people. One P., a widow aged 30 years, had illicit connection with a boy younger in age and as a result she became pregnant. P. has a son by her previous husband. Now a group of her caste members want

her to pay compensation to her previous husband, but her supporters oppose such a step. P. and her supporters have been ostracized by their castemen of the same village. But they, with the support of other villagers, live without much difficulty. The latter are enjoying cheap labour from P. and her supporters.

Divorce, widow re-marriage etc. have social sanction among them. Now they are entitled to the services of the Barber in the market place. Degraded Brahmans also serve them on ceremonial occasions. They do not work in the houses of Muchi—Leather-workers. They have no inter-dining relationship with the Dule who are another group of palanquin bearers. After death, they used to observe 30 days of ceremonial defilement. But like other high caste Hindus they now observe mourning for 10 days only. They demand economic facilities immediately. Demand for education however is not very strong among them.

The Haris of Purba Dakshin Moyna used to be feasted in the house of caste Hindus. Then they were served on banana leaves in a separate row. An attendant served them while wearing a wet cloth, which would not consequently be defiled. This old custom has been changed at Moyna at present. Kanai Ghorai of the same village took a leading part for the removal of such social disabilities just after independence and was successful in his effort.

The widow of late Kshudi Bhuiyan, without any formal invitation, attended a private feast in the locality which was noticed by one Sailabala who knew her. She brought this matter to the notice of the village elders who warned her as this was in violation of the new social conventions.

At present they have no Washerman and Barber to serve them in social functions nor have they made any organized attempt to secure their services.

Muchi—Leather-workers

They are also extremely poor and very low in social status. They are scattered in villages and have practically no caste organization of their own. No other caste works in the house

of a Muchi even if he is comparatively well off. The Muchis have four endogamous divisions, namely, (1) Ruhidas, (2) Ari, (3) Khotta, and (4) Uria, among whom Urias are inferior in social status. One Shamra of Purba-Dakshin Moyna belonging to the Ruhidas section, married a girl of the Uria sub-group in 1952. A few caste members ostracized him for this and later he paid a fine to the caste council after which, he was re-admitted into caste. No other Hindu group yet takes food at the house of the Muchis. There are altogether seven Muchi families in this village.

At Amdabad, one Gunadhar Das, a Muchi by caste, has amassed considerable wealth. Gunadhar also advances loans to other caste Hindus. There are altogether four families living here. The Muchis are denied all co-operation from caste Hindus in agricultural operations. As a result, they hire Muslim labourers at higher wages. Once in 1949, Gunadhar approached J. N. Bhowmick of the same village to help him in this regard and expressed his desire to get any other Hindu labourers at higher wages for threshing purposes. One day Sri Bhowmick with some of his co-villagers and school teachers went to his place and worked there for a while. After that, the Hindu labourers included in the team continued to work there. He has had no further difficulty in getting labourer.

Again, in 1952, Gunadhar wanted to feast a few gentlemen from all castes in his place. With the help of the High School teachers of Takapura he managed to enrol the services of caste Hindu cooks and had food prepared by them. Many gentlemen from the locality attended the function.

Thus he has been able to exert his influence not only amongst his own caste members but also among those outside his caste.

Dom

Their main occupation is basket-making and playing on drums on ceremonial occasions. They now call themselves 'Bans Kayasthas', as they work on *bāñs* or bamboo. They are also very rarely invited to ceremonial functions. None of

them is even asked to contribute for a village festival. They are practically an outcaste group.

Recently at Mirzapur members of the Barui caste objected to the use of water in a neighbouring tank by Doms. Now-a-days they are, however, served by degraded Brahmans.

In this village the younger generation of Doms arranged to worship the goddess Saraswati. This was managed by themselves. A degraded Brahman attended the function.

Last year there was communal meeting in the village of Kamarbera in which caste problems were discussed. K. Patra of the village of Mahisda had to perform a purificatory ceremony before his marriage as he is known to have been born of an illicit union.

But in Kuldiha under Nayagram P. S., they have no Brahman to serve them. One section of these people however serves in the social ceremonies of other castes as drummers. This section claims to enjoy a superior rank. Inter-dining and inter-marrying between this section and the rest of the people do not exist at all. Divorce and widow re-marriage are easy and are approved of by them. They have no organized panchayat.

There are seven Dom families in the village of Jogikhop. All of them are landless and depend on basket-making and playing drums. Previously they attended all general feasts as beggars, i.e. without formal invitation. But now-a-days they do not go without formal invitation. Sometimes they work as agricultural labourers on contract. Since Independence they have been getting the services of Barbers in the market place. They also contribute money for general village festivals and worships, after which offerings are distributed among them as among others. They are not in a position to participate actively in such functions. Doms are less organized and there is very little demand for education among them.

Chitrakar or Patidār

They are professional painters. The womenfolk also prepare small dolls, toys, etc. Sometimes they go out for begging with these things. The men prepare scrolls depicting various mythological stories which they exhibit in public places

while chanting musical verses and earn a part of the money needed for their maintenance. They also prepare idols for worship and festivals. They have easy access to the temples and shrines of the Hindus though most of them have embraced Islam. In their social and ceremonial ceremonies the Muslim Kazi or Munshi conducts the rites. They bear Hindu surnames. They also worship Vishvakarma like the Hindus.

Chitrakars are distributed in many villages of Midnapur. Their social and economic problems drew the attention of the some social workers of the locality just after the communal riot of 1946. The Bharat Sevashram Sangha of Calcutta also did some relief work among them during the famine of 1943. As a result, this organization became very popular with the people. Then a local member of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha approached a few educated people, specially the teachers of Amdabad High School, to conduct a purificatory ceremony or *Yajna*, by which all the Chitrakars could give up Islam permanently and return to the Hindu fold. Almost all the Chitrakar families (in all 17 families) except one Jiten of Amdabad-Kumirmara, accepted the proposal. Paresb and Nagen Chitrakar showed great enthusiasm and a date was fixed for the conversion. A liberal priest named Kangal Panda of village Satngabari was appointed to perform the ceremony and to become the family priest of the converts. This ceremony was performed under the leadership of Swami Prajnananda and all the Chitrakars were clad in new clothes. The women applied vermilion on their foreheads and wore conch-shell bangles like their Hindu neighbours. The news was publicized in many places through different papers and hand-bills in which *Pranab*, a monthly organ of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha played an important part. Later on, on 29 October 1946, some ceremonies were performed at Keshabpur and Chaitanyapur, Satahata P. S. Three families consisting of Manmatha, Bani and Santosh Chitrakar did not accept the proposal of conversion out of 14 families living there. Kalipada Panda of the same locality was available to conduct the family worship and festivals. Chitrakars of Nankarchak under Nandigram P. S. also stood against this move at that time.

Just after conversion, these Hinduized Chitrakars have ceased to have any relationship with the Muslim group.

During these years, a few notable changes took place at Amdabad—Kumirmara. The Brahman priest was not always available though Kangal Panda continued to act as such for a few years. Kangal Panda did not get sufficient remuneration which is generally available from caste Hindus for such services. As a result, he took it to be a losing concern. Kangal Panda spread out his field of activity among many scheduled caste in the neighbourhood. So at the time of this necessity, the Chitrakars failed to get the assistance of a Brahman priest. Nagen and Paresh died. After that Jiten tried his best to revive Islam among them as the distressed Chitrakars did not get any further support from the Hindu castes in social and economic spheres. Now the Chitrakars of Amdabad have returned to the fold of Islam again. Hindu names have been changed. Kshudiram Chitrakar aged 25 is now called 'Khursed', Jogendra Nath Chitrakar is 'Joynuddin', etc. Now the Kazis are attending to their marriage ceremonies, Id-Festival and the Bakr-Id Festival. They now dislike to accept the meat of goat if dressed by Hindus. They also pay regular subscription for village worships. The death pollution is observed for one month and the Washerman and Barber attend the ceremony. But no marriage relationship has yet been established with the real Muslims.

The Chitrakars of Keshabpur and Chaitanyapur do not face any difficulty in their community life. In respect of their financial condition, they are well-off. The Brahman priest attends them regularly. One Mahishya youth fell in love with a Chitrakar girl of Keshabpur and with the help of the villagers the wedding was solemnized. The Chitrakars of these villages live happily and fully co-operating with the local caste Hindus.

Lodha (Savar)

The Lodhas are an ex-criminal tribe and now they are designated as 'Denotified tribe'. They are now one of the scheduled tribes of West Bengal.

Most of the Lodhas claim that they are 'Savaras', reference to which tribe can be traced to the great epic of *Ramayana*. Due to changes in the social and economic conditions the Lodhas have accepted the challenge of the times and have taken to new occupations in place of crime. Due to extreme poverty and constant exploitation by the more advanced and organized groups around them, they have lost much of their tribal strength and group consciousness.

The Lodhas of Kukai have been re-organized under the leadership of a caste Hindu young man. A good many educationists, social and political workers visited this place from time to time, whose influence and preachings have infused new ideas into the minds of the villagers. They have their own religious and festival cycle for a whole year, in which Brahmanical ideas have also been incorporated.

The Lodhas of Birkar, under Narayangarh P. S. once came in contact in 1933 with a Hindu holy man named Rajendra Nath Das Brahma Abadhut who tried to unite these scattered people under a single banner. He also held a purificatory ceremony or *Yajna* on a large scale. An appeal was made to Lodhas to give up a few harmful old tribal customs. His untimely death however gave a serious set back to this upliftment work which had been started by him.

The Lodhas of Kadamdiha, P.S. Nayagram, generally mix with the local Mahatos and Santals. They are not particularly concerned about the betterment of the whole community. They live practically in isolation in jungle areas subsisting on edible roots and tubers for a few months and of cultivation for the rest of the year.

The whole of Lodha society is lacking in proper leadership. A few upliftment programmes have already been implemented in the area on the initiative of two young men in respect of spread of education, cultivating sanitary habits and re-organizing their communal dance and music, so as to bring them together as a compact community. To do this, a few mass gatherings and meetings were held from time to time where a good many distinguished educationists and public men like Prof N. K. Bose, Dr S. S. Sarkar, Mr R. K. Gupta, Dy.

Inspector-General of Police, Sri Panchanan Bose, Sri Benoy Ghosh, Sri Gopabandhu Chaudhuri, etc. were present and spoke on the various aspects of their problems and suggested suitable remedies to improve their condition. Their spheres of activities covered the following villages.

<i>Villages</i>	<i>P. S.</i>
Sankaridanga	Dantan
Birkar	Narayangarh
Daharpur	
Kukai	Keshiari
Simuldanga	
Nayagram	Nayagram
Kadamdiha	

Most of the Lodhas showed a strong desire for social reform. Even to-day, quite a number of young Lodhas have been participating in all social movements in this area. The foremost among them are Ram Chandra Digar, Sudhir Chandra Bhakta, Atul Chandra Digar, Makra Bhakta, including one member each of the Mahato and Santal tribes, named Haladhar Mahato and Dubraj Saren respectively.

Conclusion

It will be seen from the above facts that caste traditions are in a process of change now and there is a persistent attempt for improvement of the social and economic condition of the various castes and tribal groups. Success of these movements depends on the co-operation and acceptance by the neighbouring castes of the changes that have benefited the backward people without harming their own cause. As a hopeful sign, some well-to-do persons of various castes sometimes take a lead in these matters. Proper education and a better economic status are the basic pre-requisites for a man to be able to initiate such a move. A well-organized community could easily develop inter-village and inter-district relationship amongst the members as in the case of Paundras of this area, and

naturally their united demands will receive the co-operation and sympathy of the Congress party or Government, if it is for a right cause. Amongst themselves, however, there is a tendency of these well-to-do or educated persons to form an exclusive group or to maintain their sway on the people, though the age-old orthodox sub-groupings are melting away through the growth of a liberal spirit. People of the Dom or the Muchi castes, being not very numerous at a particular place and owing to lack of proper leadership or sympathy, have not yet been able to build up any organization of their own or to realize any social and political advantage for their own caste.

AN INCIPIENT CASTE ORGANIZATION IN THE GARO HILLS

ROBBINS BURLING

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THE uniquely distinctive feature of Indian village organization is surely the phenomenon of caste, and yet the Indian caste system has proved to be not only enormously complex but almost infinitely varied. A caste system suggests such characteristics as: assignment by birth and caste endogamy; ritually and socially sanctioned hierarchy; restrictions on intercaste social affairs such as dining; division of labour between the castes often organized according to the jajmani system. Few of these are universally associated with caste, however. The jajmani system, for instance, is not an invariable associate of the caste system, for the village in the Malnad described by Harper has castes, but its economy is not organized by jajmani principles (Harper, 1959). The degree of mutual social exclusion is extremely varied, and even endogamy is violated by some systems of hypergamy. It has been repeatedly shown, moreover, that even though the castes can in principle be hierarchically ordered, the different castes may have quite different views as to what the actual order is. It may not be possible to give a single rank order of the castes which every one in a single locality can agree upon. Marriott has even pointed out that two quite different theories have been used to justify a particular ranking: (1) the 'attributional' by which rank is believed to be a function of the behaviour or attributes of the caste, including such traits as its diet and occupation, and (2) the 'interactional' theory by which rank is assigned on the basis of specific interaction between various castes, as in giving and receiving food and ritual services (Marriott, 1959). As variable as the relations between castes may be, a few common features seem to be found everywhere.

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Perhaps the most important of these are that a ranking of social groups *does* exist, even though the actual rank order or even the criteria of ranking may be in dispute. Indeed without this, we would be unlikely to call it a caste system.

Along the western border of the Garo Hills in Assam, near the market of Garobadha, there is a social system which has some of the characteristics of caste, but here not only the precise rank order, but the very existence of ranking itself is in doubt. In this area, the civilization of the plains has been impinging upon the very different culture of the Assam hills. The local population includes a number of so-called 'plains tribes' which have a somewhat intermediate status between the 'hill tribes' themselves and the plains people, but both hill tribes and plains people are found there, as well. The situation has some of the characteristics typically associated with caste organization in other parts of India, but in many ways it retains its tribal aspect, for the groups are far less interdependent than castes traditionally are. It can be considered one of 'incipient caste' if we assume that the various ethnic groups have been tending away from a purely tribal situation in the past toward a slightly more caste-like one at present. It should not be implied, however, that continued development toward a more complete caste organization is inevitable. Many imponderables, such as the spread of education, rural development, and other forms of government aid make it impossible to predict the future with any assurance.

Boardly speaking the ethnic groups found in this region lie on a continuum, ranging from almost purely tribal and traditional to those which are strongly influenced by the civilization and ideals of plains India. Whether or not one regards this continuum as resembling the hierarchy of a well-developed caste system depends largely upon one's point of view. The Garos, for instance, who are in general the least 'plains-like' and who alone do not consider themselves Hindus, never for a moment think of themselves as having the lowest social or ritual position. Rather, they are oriented toward quite different ideas and tend to be alternately contemptuous, irritated, or amused by the Hindus' assumption of superiority over their

'beef-eating' neighbours. It never occurs to the Garos to give up beef themselves. On the other hand, some of the Hinduized groups do tend to rank people according to their degree of adherence to Hindu standards. It is in fact one of the interesting features of this area that sociological observers are not the only ones who might disagree on whether to call these groups castes or tribes. People within the system also view the situation differently. The more Hinduized groups are more apt to interpret their position as that of caste than the less Hinduized ones. No one recognizes a hierarchy as having any importance if it places himself in a low position.

I am not concerned with trying to decide whether or not this is to be considered as a caste system, but rather with describing the objective situation in the hope that by knowing even the most varied situations which might be considered as being caste-like that our general understanding of caste may be deepened. Since the caste system is often supposed to have spread by the gradual incorporation of tribes, this situation may also have implications for our understanding of the development of caste.

In the Garobadha region, most villages include members of only one, or at most two or three closely related groups. The major groups and their subdivisions are listed below

The Garo

This is the western edge of the Garo area. Further east the population is pure Garo and even the Garos of the Garobadha region generally look to the east as the focus of their own culture rather than west to the plains. All Garos speak their own language in their daily life, and most of them speak Bengali rather poorly, if at all. They rarely speak any other language than these two. All Garos are matrilineal, taking lineage name and inheritance from the mother's side of the family. They are the most strongly Mongoloid of any of the groups living in the area. The Garos now include a number of separate divisions, the result of outside religious influences.

'Songsarek' Garos : These are the Garos who retain their traditional religion. (I use the term *Songsarek* which is

the term the Garos use themselves, in preference to the only possible English alternatives, 'heathen', 'pagan', or 'non-Christian' all of which have unpleasant connotations.) The Songsareks of this area hardly differ from those living throughout the western part of the district; they generally continue to wear their traditional clothing, live in typical Garo bamboo houses, and perform the traditional Garo ceremonies and sacrifices. The world which is important to them does not extend far beyond the market area. They marry locally, they trade locally and they worship locally. Most Songsareks in this area continue to depend primarily upon jhum (shifting) agriculture, but a few have taken some wet paddy fields, as well.

Baptist Garos : There are numerous Baptist Christians in the area, the converts of American missionaries, mostly living in their own villages, separate from other groups. They are more likely to take to paddy agriculture than the Songsareks, but many of them also depend primarily upon jhum, and most take at least some jhum land to supplement their paddy. Many of the characteristic customs of the Songsareks are not practised by the Baptists: their music and dancing is lost, they seldom have bachelor houses for the unmarried men to sleep in, they build different-style houses. But in language and largely in family and village organization they remain hardly distinguishable from the Songsareks. Baptists are far more likely to have some education, and most Baptist villages have a school and school teacher, while most Songsarek villages do not. Education through the primary level is exclusively in the Garo language, and many Baptists are literate in it. Their horizons have expanded beyond those of the Songsareks, for their world embraces at least the whole of the Garo Hills. Many of them go to Tura, the district headquarters, or elsewhere at some point of their lives to study or work, and they are more likely to marry into a distant village. Periodic religious meetings take many of them to distant parts of the district, though few have any strong identification with the rest of the nation. Their 'country' is the 'Garo Country', and Tura is their cultural capital.

Catholic Garos : The Catholics form a smaller group than the Baptists, but there are a number of Catholic villages in the area as well. Most of what has been said of the Baptists is true also of the Catholics. They too have schools, they too look at least to the whole of the Garo Hills as their home, they too are more likely than the Songsareks to take up paddy agriculture. They have lost essentially the same customs that the Baptists have lost, but they have, of course, acquired a different set of new customs—or at least a different set of religious practices.

Hindu Garos : There is just one small village of Hindu Garos, consisting of only ten houses. They are a part of a small sect that has adherents in a few villages in Mymensingh district in Pakistan, and in scattered villages elsewhere in Assam, as far away as the Mikir Hills. The founder of this sect seems to have been a Garo man living in Mymensingh district who was influenced by the teachings of Brahmans and who with his wife was converted to Hinduism possibly sixty years ago. Gradually, as others joined them, and as children were brought up in the new religion, their numbers increased until to-day there may be several hundreds of them all together. A striking feature of this group is the remarkable parallels it shows to the Christian Garos. In both cases joining a new religion has been a matter of individual conversion, though there has been less active proselytizing by the Hindus than by either Christian group. The Hindu Garos have lost virtually exactly the same series of traits that the Christians have ; Hindus also do not have bachelor houses, they no longer beat the traditional drums or do the traditional dances, they build different types of houses. They are also better educated than the Songsareks, though unlike the Christians, they send their children to a Bengali school, and if literate, it is in that language rather than in Garo. Concomitantly they generally speak considerably better Bengali than the other Garos do. Like the Christians their perspectives have expanded beyond that of the Songsareks, but not in precisely the same manner as among Christians. Instead the Hindus look to the few scattered villages in Assam and in Pakistan, where members of their

own religion live, and they maintain regular communication with them through correspondence. Beyond this they look to Mankachar to the west, from which come Brahmans who perform ceremonies at their life crisis, and in general they identify themselves more closely with plains India than the Christians do, although they never deny their Garo background or pretend to be anything else than Garos.

The Koch

There is an ethnic group living along the western border of the Garo Hills, and in neighbouring Goalpara, who call themselves and are known to others as Koch, or Kochu. There has been a certain amount of speculation as to whether these are related to people who have been called by the same name in other parts of Assam or to the Koch kings of earlier days. I cannot answer this question, but I do feel that it is quite inadequate to call them Hinduized Garos, as has occasionally been done. Their language, though a Bodo language like Garo, is completely distinct and is separated from Garo by many hundred years of independent development. Given such a lengthy separation, I do not think it reasonable to consider the Koch to be partially Hinduized Garos. The Koch themselves do not recognize any affiliation with others outside of their own local area, except for nebulous references to 'our raja', who is, or was, (they are very uncertain) located in Cooch Behar. Except for this feeble affiliation to a distant raja, who has no bearing on their present lives, their horizons are limited to the local area, and for governmental purposes, those within the borders of the Garo Hills district look to Tura, but this is not the centre of cultural life to them as it is to the Garos.

The Koch group includes some half dozen subdivisions: Wanang (or Simbri), Harigaiya, Tintikiya, Satpari, Banai, and Dosgaya (or Songkor). These are all endogamous, and none condescend to receive food from any of the others. To a great extent each lives in separate villages and all depend primarily on wet rice agriculture, but they vary considerably in their customs. Some are matrilineal and in fact show great

similarity in social organization to the Garos, while others have various degrees of emphasis on patrilineal affiliation and inheritance. In some groups matrilocality is the usual rule, while in others the wife habitually moves into her husband's house at marriage.

Unlike the Garos, all Koch consider themselves to be Hindu, and all avoid beef, but they differ considerably as to which other Hindu practices they adhere to. Some, for instance, sacrifice animals in their ceremonies in much the same fashion as the Garos, while others avail themselves of the services of Brahmans and perform no sacrifices. Some wear the sacred thread, others do not, some are more particular about the kinds of food they eat than others. Apparently some of the groups have made an effort to Sanscritize their religion over the course of the last generation or so, by abandoning rice-beer and the raising of animals for meat, and by the assumption of the sacred thread (Srinivas, 1955). In other words, the Koch present a familiar picture of endogamous caste groups, each laying down the rules of its own behaviour, some striving more successfully than others to assume the symbols and behaviour of high status.

Though all the Koch groups speak closely related dialects within the Bodo language group, they deny that these are all mutually intelligible. A brief comparison of the vocabulary of these dialects makes it evident that they are very close to each other, however, far closer than any of them are to Garo. Most of them can speak fluent Bengali as well, and in some cases they are shifting over to Bengali even in their domestic affairs. Most Koch can also carry on a passable conversation in Garo. The Koch are somewhat Mongoloid but not as strongly so as the Garo.

I will not try to discuss each of the Koch groups in detail, but will mention only two, the Wanang and the Dosgaya, which perhaps constitute the two extremes of Hindu influence.

Wanang Kochs : The Wanang generally live in their own villages, build their houses in a slightly different style from other Koch, and their women wear different type of cloths than the others. They freely admit that they are 'almost like the

Garos'. They sacrifice animals at the time of sickness or at annual celebrations they eat meat other than beef quite readily, and raise some animals other than cattle for their flesh. They do not avail themselves of the services of Brahmans, or of Napits (Barbers) and they do not wear the sacred thread. Boys most often move into the father-in-law's house, and at any rate it is rare for a girl to move into her father-in-law's house. They have, like the Garos, named and exogamous matrilineal descent groups.

Dosgaya Koch : This group also most often lives in villages of their own. I do know of at least one village where they live mixed with both Tintikiya and Harigaiya, though even here their houses are built around separate court-yards. The Dosgaya use Bengali fluently, and many have denied to me that they know any other language, though I am certain that an important reason for their denial is an attempt to hide what they feel to be the rather backward tongue of their ancestors. They wear sacred thread, do not keep any animals other than the cattle they use for ploughing and for milk. They call Brahmans in to officiate at their weddings and their funerals. Girls usually move into their father-in-law's house at the time of their marriage, but even the Dosgaya retain named exogamous matrilineal descent groups and possibly this constitutes evidence that they once lived matrilocally like the Wanang. Some of them also reckon descent according to patrilineal *g o t r a*. Sons receive the bulk of the inheritance, but girls may get a smaller share. They do not brew rice-beer and do not sacrifice, and though they sometimes eat meat, such behaviour is not fully condoned.

The other Koch groups are more or less intermediate between these two, some more like the Dosgaya, some more like the Wanang, but all maintain their distinction from all of the others.

The Hajong

The Hajong are a small group, apparently largely confined to the borders of the Garo Hills, and to the adjacent parts of East Pakistan. Many, but not all of those now living in the

Garó Hills are refugees from Pakistan since Partition. They speak a rather divergent dialect of Bengali. (This is a border area between the Bengali and Assamese languages, and it is not very meaningful to try to specify which language they speak in most cases—certainly I cannot judge it. I use the term Bengali because that is the term they use most of the time.) I never discovered a Hajong who gave any hint that he had any other mother tongue, and if they have a tribal origin, or stem from a linguistically different group, this fact seems to have been completely forgotten. Hajongs can only rarely communicate intelligibly in Garó. Their villages and dress are much like those of the Dosgaya and some other Koch. Like the others, they generally live in their own villages and they depend entirely upon wet rice agriculture. In their universal use of the Bengali language, they are closer to the plains people than any of the Koch. They do not keep chickens or pigs, and some claim that they are better than the Koch because they do not drink rice-beer, though probably some Hajong at least do drink, and some Koch claim to shun it. They are patrilineal, without even the named matrilineal sibs that all of the Koch have.

Some Hajong have taken to wearing the sacred thread, but this remains a matter of individual preference rather than an inherited right. The wearers and the non-wearers do not avoid each other, but live mixed in the same villages and are not apparently very different in their customs. Some of those who do not wear the sacred thread feel that the others are 'putting on airs.'

The Dalu

The Dalu are represented in the Garobadha area by just one village, though it is a large one for the area, having about three hundred people. They came from the southern part of the Garó Hills something like forty years ago, from near the town which is still called Dalu, and members of their group still live there on both sides of the present international border. They have no traditions of having come from any other place before Dalu, but they do have the tradition that their ancestors

spoke a language like Manipuri, though nobody now living speaks anything but Bengali. The Dalu deny any particularly close relation to any other groups, certainly not to the Koch or to the Hajong, and in fact they are the least 'tribal' of any of the groups discussed. Their women sometimes wear sarees of the Bengali type, unlike any of the groups mentioned above, except for some of the Hindu Garos, and the men wear dhoties or occasionally lungyis. Racially they seem to be almost indistinguishable from the plains people except for a few of the women who show a slight trace of some mongoloid ancestry. They depend primarily upon paddy agriculture, though more than any of the groups mentioned above they depend also upon trade for their livelihood.

The Dalu are now divided into three religious sects, two of which are said to have been started within the last decade or so. These reformist groups assume some of the symbols of Hinduism such as the sacred thread, and the use of Brahmans and Napits, but not all people follow their lead. These are not closed groups at the present time and the reformed sects will accept spouses from the other, though they demand that inmarrying spouses accept their sect.

Besides these groups which are more or less tribal in nature, and which all have agriculture as their main occupation, there are other Hindus and Moslems of various backgrounds in the neighbourhood, mostly engaged in trade of one sort or another, many of them associated with the market at Garobadha. Many of these are from the region of Mankachar, a Bengali town about fifteen miles to the west, but there are some villages inhabited by non-tribals a good deal closer than that. Except for the participation of Brahmans in the ceremonies of some of these groups, however, the main contact between tribals and others is through the weekly market at Garobadha.

Having outlined the significant groups in the neighborhood, I will next specify the ways in which these groups are similar and the ways that they differ from the more typical castes of other parts of India. This discussion falls under four headings: (1) restrictions on intermarriage and interdining; (2) symbolic differences of dress, architecture, etc.; (3) occu-

pational and economic differentiation and inter-dependence ; and (4) attitudes towards caste hierarchy.

(1) *Restrictions on intermarriage and interdining* : The only major groups listed above that interdine freely are the Songsarek, Baptist and Catholic Garos. None of these have any hesitation at all about accepting food from any of the others. All freely eat all meat, including beef, and though some do and some do not drink rice-beer, this is not the sort of difference that makes interdining impossible. The reluctance of the Hindu Garos to interdine with the others seems to be the main source, in fact just about the only source of friction between Hindus and other Garos. One lady had been Songsarek but became Hindu when she married a Hindu man. Eventually, however, they both turned Songsarek again and she gave the impossibility of eating with her own family as her reason for not wishing to remain Hindu.

The subdivisions of the Hajong and the Dalu also do not stand aloof from each other's cooking, but with all other groups the restriction is mutual, and apparently does not lead to much difficulty. The fact that the different groups live preponderantly in their own villages makes it relatively easy to maintain dining restrictions without strain or complication.

Intermarriage rules are a bit more complex. All Garos intermarry with each other, but in each case the bride and groom generally have to agree to adhere to the same religion. In most cases this has meant that a Songsarek has accepted the religion, either Christian or Hindu of his spouse, though in a few cases people brought up as Christians or Hindus have gone back to the religion of their ancestors after marrying a Songsarek. All the four groups of Garos accept converts from the other branches, the Christians and Hindus demanding that certain rules be followed, such as the abstinence from rice-beer, or from meat on Friday, or from beef, the Songsareks readily accepting back into the fold anybody who finds these restrictions too difficult to keep. Each Koch group marries only within itself, and both Hajong and Dalu marry only their own members. The subdivisions of the Dalu are like the various types of Garo, in their demand that intermarrying

spouse accept the rules of the particular sect of his spouse. Inter-marriage between Garo and Koch or between any of the major groups is rare but not completely unknown. There is one small neighbourhood, only a section of a village, where a few intermarried Garo and Koch couples live. They prefer to simply call themselves Garo, apparently because the Garos have less hesitancy in accepting such people than the Koch or others who look upon mixed marriages with greater distaste.

(2) *Symbolic differences*: There are many detailed differences between the groups that are unimportant in themselves, but which have come to symbolize group identification. The most obvious of these are in matters of dress, adornment, and architecture. Garo men have traditionally worn only a loin cloth and the women a short skirt, but to-day all Garos wear 't'-shirts, men frequently wear shorts, and the village women sometimes wear tailored blouses and longer skirts which extend below the knee. Christians do not radically change their dress, but they are a bit more likely to wear shorts in the case of men and long skirts and sometimes even a *chadar*, a cloth wrapped around the upper part of the body and over one shoulder in the case of the women. Christians furthermore never wear the traditional Garo ear-rings, and Christian men always cut their hair short. In the area of which I am writing, most, though not quite all, Songsareks continue to wear ear-rings and most men wear their hair long and knotted behind, so it is generally possible to tell at sight a Songsarek from a Christian. Baptists and Catholics dress alike. Hindu Garo women generally, but not uniformly, wear Bengali-type sarees, and the men often wear dhoties. Hindus also frequently wear one or more strings of wooden beads (*mālā*) around their necks as a symbol of their religion. It is then frequently, though again not universally, possible to tell the Hindu Garo at sight. All Koch men generally wear dhoties. The Wanang women wear a distinctive type of yellow-brown finely striped cloth. One generally hangs from the waist, a second is tucked under the armpits. All other Koch women, and the Hajong women also, wear a single brightly striped cloth in which red usually predominates over a white background, which hangs from over

the breasts to below the knees. These are distinctive and gay clothes, and are entirely different from other clothing in the area. The Dalu women wear sarees generally, and the men dhoties, though they wear loungyis around their houses.

Garos Songsareks build traditional Garo bamboo houses supported on large posts, with the door at one end. Christians, particularly the Baptists, usually build their houses closer to the ground, frequently have doors on the sides rather than the ends and often have separate cook-houses, unlike the Songsareks. This means that it is easily possible when entering a village to tell at a glance whether it is Songsarek or Christian. The usual reason given by the Christians for this changed architecture is that their entertainment patterns no longer require a house to be built with a view to accommodating the entire village at a rice-beer drinking party. But Christians do entertain large numbers for tea drinking and it seems clear that the difference is maintained largely for its symbolic value—it is a sign that announces to all that here lives a Christian, a place where one must not expect to be served rice-beer.

Hindu Garos have still different houses. They generally build theirs on packed earth-platforms and they coat the woven bamboo walls with mud. This style originated in Mymensing district from where so many of this group migrated; but like other differences it is maintained for its symbolic value, and even people from nearby who marry into this village and become Hindus build their houses in this way.

The Wanang build houses on earth-platforms with mud-covered bamboo walls, but unlike either the Hindu Garos and the other Koch, they generally put their door at the end of the house rather than along the side. The houses of the other Koch are like those of the Hindu Garos, while the Hajong are similar except that they more often paint their houses with white earth, giving them a very polished and clean appearance which contrasts with the drab brown of the others.

As I have indicated, these are all minor matters, unimportant except as symbol for the separation which the people wish to maintain between their groups. In some parts of the world minority groups strive diligently to imitate the dominant ones

in such matters as dress, and in this way they identify themselves more closely with the more prestigious groups. It is striking that here, however much imitation there may be in ceremonial matters, in conversion to Christianity, and assumption of Hindu status symbols, the effect of dress and architecture is to the separate rather than draw together the different groups.

(3) *Occupational specialization* : It is of course one of the most characteristic features of typical castes that each has a traditional occupation and is dependent upon others for goods and services which they do not produce themselves. It is in this respect the different ethnic groups of Garobadha area are least like castes, for there is little difference in the occupations of the groups, and no ritually prescribed relationship of exchange and mutual interdependence between them. Still, a few tasks are done better by one or the other of the groups, and one can imagine that given the proper encouragement, this might conceivably form the basis for a relationship that could be interpreted as caste specialization. All of the people I have described are farmers, and most of them have little other work. Some of them have regular ritual relationship with Brahmans, but the Brahmans are almost as foreign to the area as the European Catholic fathers or American Baptist missionaries who perform somewhat similar services for the adherents of their respective religions. All have regular market relationships with plains people, but these are completely impersonal, governed by strictly economic considerations on both sides, and having nothing of the aspect of the long-term relationship frequently associated with caste.

There are, however, two distinct types of agriculture. Many of the Garos depend exclusively on jhum cultivation, in which they use land for only two years before abandoning it to the jungle for several years. Almost all Garos open at least a little jungle for this type of agriculture, and it is their traditional method of subsistence. None of the other groups ever open more than a tiny amount of such land, and then only for a small kitchen garden to raise a few vegetables. Many of them do not even open this much. These other groups, and in the

last generation or so a good many of the Garos too, have permanent cultivation in any place where there is a stretch of land which is flat enough to make clearing worthwhile. Most of this is used for wet cultivation of rice, but some is used for dry cultivation, primarily of jute and mustard. Associated with these two types of agriculture are entirely different annual cycles (planting and harvesting times, etc.), different techniques and different ownership patterns, since jhum land is essentially village owned, while paddy land, wherever it is opened, becomes the private property of the opener, to use repeatedly year after year. When Garos adopt paddy agriculture, they take over the technology, ownership pattern, and economic arrangements virtually intact from the other people, so that all groups with paddy agriculture practise it in the same way.

All people must sell some of their crops for cash. The jhum cultivators of this region sell primarily cotton, and chillis while the permanent cultivators sell jute, some mustard seed and occasionally surplus rice. The jhum cultivators also sometimes sell vegetables on a small scale in the market to the other people who do not generally grow many vegetables of their own.

There are a few other skills in which certain groups excel over others. The Garos are generally recognized to be best at certain types of bamboo-work, and some make a supplementary income by selling their products, particularly woven bamboo mats to the others. All Hajong and Koch women, on the other hand, weave unlike the Garos. Most of this weaving is entirely for their own consumption, but occasionally they weave cloth of the type that Garos wear, and sell it to them. But the Garos could by no remote stretch of the imagination be called 'mat weavers' and it is almost as incorrect to label the other groups as 'cloth weavers'. All are primarily agriculturists.

(4) *Attitudes toward caste hierarchy*: The characteristics discussed above may seem to indicate that these groups are much more 'tribal' than 'caste'-like in nature, but in important respects they also resemble castes. Without a network of ritual or service relationships uniting the groups it is impossible to support an interactional theory of caste ranking for this area.

Since Garos neither perform nor accept services from others which anyone considers demeaning they can maintain their equality without compromise. Those who do describe the groups as if ranked can for the most part do so only on the basis of the attributes of the groups, especially according to their diet. By such standards, to be sure the beef-eating Garos rank low, but nothing force the Garos to accept this standard. People are more often willing to consider others as less honourable than themselves because of their less rigid adherence to certain formal rules of Hinduism. Those who make use of Brahmans in their ceremonies admit that the Brahmans are even 'bigger' than they themselves, that is have a more honoured position, but their very use of Brahmans is cited as giving them a rank higher than others who do not. In general the reformed sects of each major group tend to look a bit askance at their less abstemious fellows, even if the latter rarely admit the superiority of the former. The Koch groups with their endogamy, dietary exclusiveness, and apparent efforts to Sanscritize their practices, demonstrate behaviour which has been found in other more typical caste areas.

Conclusion

The population of the Garobadha region is organized in a social system which has a few characteristics of caste. There is no jajmani system but as has been pointed out, the jajmani system is not an essential element of a village with a fully elaborated caste structure. More significantly the people of this region have hardly any idea that occupation might be assigned by ethnic affiliation, except that Garos are considered properly to be jhum agriculturist and a few people have relationship with Brahmans and Napits who do have hereditary occupations. The major groups are endogamous, but this feature is not confined to caste. On the other hand, there are restrictions on interdining which is a distinctive feature of caste. But in the most significant feature of all, the people themselves disagree. Some view the various groups as though they are arranged in a hierarchy and, from their point of view, it is not unreasonable to call them castes. Others do not

interpret the differences as having any hierarchial aspect at all. To them the groups are certainly tribes. The same social system can be equally well described in either terms.

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SANTALS IN RELATION TO HINDU CASTES

BHABANANDA MUKHERJEE

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IN the month of September, 1959, the writer visited a Santal village, Mauldanga (Mahuldanga) in the Union of Charicha of the district of Birbhum in West Bengal. The village is situated inside the Charicha forest. It is one mile away from the south-eastern border of the district of Santal Pargana and ten miles from Suri town. The Hindu village, Tangsuli, is only at a distance of half a mile from the Santal village. A road connects the two villages. The Santals have been living here for more than six decades with the Hindus.

Composition

Mauldanga (Santal)		Tangsuli (Hindu)	
Clan	No. of families	Caste	No. of families
Soren	5	Sadgop	14
Tudu	6	Tili	5
Marandi	4	Hari	2
Murmu	4	Dom	3
Hembrom	3	Mal	5
Kisku	1	Khaira	7
Baske	1	Vaisnav	1
	<hr/> 24	Kamar (Bihari)	2
			<hr/> 39

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SANTAL POPULATION

No. of families	Clan	Adult		Child	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
4	Marandi	7	6	5	3
5	Soren	9	11	4	7
1	Kisku	1	1	—	1
6	Tudu	8	10	5	5
4	Marma	6	7	2	4
3	Hembrom	7	6	7	4
1	Baske	3	2	1	—
<u>24</u>		<u>41</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>24</u>

There are eleven joint families. Seven are composed of father and married son ; two of married brother ; one of father-in-law and son-in-law and one of widowed mother-in-law and son-in-law.

Occupations

(1) Santal : The Santals of Mauldanga engage themselves gainfully in the works of cultivation, agricultural labour, collection of *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) leaves and fuel for consumption and sale and in the services of Hindu households. Every Santal family owns land under cultivating possession and extracts oil from *māhūā* (*Bassia latifolia*) and *nēm* (*Melia azadirachta*) seeds.

They cultivate the land of the Hindus as well on share basis, getting one third of the paddy.

The son of the Santal headman is a carpenter. His work is confined within the three Hindu villages and everywhere he works on *jio* (tithe) system. He works mostly on plough and gets 4 *suli* (25 seers) of paddy against each plough in a year from each household. One Santal works as a constable in the Police Department of the West Bengal Government.

(2) Hindu castes : Most of them, except the Dom, the Mal, and the Khaira, have land under cultivating possession. Their occupations in general are given below :

Castes	Occupations
1. Sadgop	1. Agriculture 2. Service in office 3. School teacher 4. Grocery
2. Tili	1. Agriculture
3. Hari	1. Village <i>Chowkidar</i> 2. Ferryman
4. Dom	1. Wet nurse
5. Vaisnav	1. Agriculture
6. Hari, Mal, Dom and Khaira	1. Labour work

Inter-relationship

(a) Between Mauldanga and Tangsuli Villages

(1) The Santals cultivate the land of the Hindu castes on one third share and are employed as daily labourers by the Hindus on daily payment of Rs. 1.25 nP.

(2) The Hindus and the Santals have their agricultural implements made or repaired on the jio system by the Bihari blacksmith resident of the Santal village. The blacksmith gets 4 suli (25 seers) of paddy from each house against a plough every year.

(3) The Santals take cash loan from the Sadgops on an interest of 3 nP. per rupee per month and clear the debt either by means of labour or in kind.

(4) Tax is collected from both by a Tahsildar, who is a Potter by caste.

(5) The Santal women are employed in the households of the Hindus for boiling and husking paddy and washing clothes.

(6) The Hindus and the Santals sometimes borrow each other's cart or bullock on mutual understanding.

(b) *Between Santal village (Mauldanga) and outside*

(1) The Santals obtain pots, like the Hindus, from the Potters of Nimdasapur, at a distance of two miles, either by payment or in exchange of vegetables.

(2) The Santals obtain tambour on jio system from the Bihari Muchi Caste of Telibani village in Santal Pargana, at a distance of nine miles.

(3) They frequently visit Suri, the district town of Birbhum, at a distance of ten miles, for the sale of Sal leaves and fuel and for legal cases concerning land.

(4) They visit Ranigram at a distance of six miles for selling vegetables and buying other articles either by payment or by exchange with husks of paddy.

(5) They visit Nimdasapur, Bistupur, Kulkuri, within four miles, to get paddy in exchange of vegetables.

(6) One Santal is already working on behalf of the Praja Socialist Party of the District and intends to become member of the State Legislative Assembly from the tribal constituency. He, however, has very little influence on his own community in the village.

The Santals place the castes of the locality on the basis of the criterion of wealth in the following order. The criteria of caste attributes based on the purity of occupation, diet, marriage and sacrifice, do not appeal to them.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Brahman | 6. Saha |
| 2. Chhatri | 7. Dhopa |
| 3. Kayastha | 8. Hari |
| 4. Sadgop | 9. Dom |
| 5. Potter | 10. Bauri |
| 11. Muchi | |

The Santal men and women project different attitude towards taking food from the hands of the Hindu castes. The

Santal men are willing to take cooked food from the following castes.

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| 1. Brahman | 4. Sadgop |
| 2. Chhatri | 5. Potter |
| 3. Kaystha | 6. Saha |

The Santal women accept only puffed and flattened rice and molasses and not any kind of cooked food from the the hand of any caste, but are unwilling to take them even from the following castes who also avoid their touch on any food article.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. Hari | 4. Muchi |
| 2. Dom | 5. Dhopa |
| 3. Bauri | 6. Kulu |

Santal Culture of Mauldanga

The village is of traditional linear type. The houses are built on either side of the road. The exterior walls exhibit white clay paintings. Coloured paintings on the interior walls of the rooms and remnants of wood carving on the lintel are still seen. In the use of clothes, the Santals scrupulously follow the Bengalis. They use oil-press for extracting oil, bow and arrow and different kinds of traps for games and birds. Dances are still alive. They drink and dance on festive occasions throughout the day. They have exogamous clan organization and adult marriage is the rule. Divorce is still practised. Any infringement of social rules is taken up by the Santal council which is composed of Headman (m a j h i), Asstt. Headman (j a g m a j h i), messenger (g o d o t) and judicial assistant (p a r g a n a) of the Headman. The seat (m a j h i t h a n) from which the Headman used to dispense justice, has broken down and has not been re-built. They hold their annual hunt (d i s e m s e n d r a) in the month of Vaisakh, when Deheri, the principal Headman of the Charicha forest, takes old and unresolved cases for re-examination. This annual hunt has to be undertaken, lest the tigers of the forest would kill their cattle.

The priest (*naike*) and his assistant (*kudam naike*) are responsible for rituals.

Even to-day they celebrate the following festivals.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. Erokshim | in the month of Jaistha (May-June) |
| 2. Hunihar | " " " " Sravana (July-August) |
| 3. Dasai | " " " " Aswin (September-October) |
| 4. Janthar | " " " " Aghrahayana (November-December) |
| 5. Sohorai | " " " " Paus (December-January) |
| 6. Mag and Jatra | " " " " Mag (January-February) |
| 7. Baha | " " " " Phalgun (February-March) |

Erokshim (*hariarsim*) was performed in the middle of September. Usually this is celebrated during the months of May-June after completion of the transplantation of paddy. As one family could not complete it in time, it was deferred.

Comment

It is seen that the Santals of Mauldanga still adhere to their traditional culture at least in the major cultural traits. Agriculture (plough cultivation) has been known to them for centuries. The Santal women take fancy for the female dress of the Bengali women. The style in their wear has changed too, but the majority have retained the traditional style.

The integration between the Santals and the Hindus of these two villages has been achieved on the economic frontier. Apart from the fact of economic interdependence, it is seen that the Santals have been absorbed within an economic system, locally known as *jio* (tithe), which is traditional in the villages of India. They avail of the same system in the horizontal spread of their economic relationship beyond the bounds of the village they live in. In spite of their living in close proximity with the Hindus and their regular contact, they have not been absorbed in the vertical hierarchical order of the Hindu caste organization. They do not know the merits of caste hierarchy, nor have they made endeavours to come within it by introducing and practising Brahmanical

traits in their social system. The fact of discrimination in the matter of taking cooked and uncooked food does not speak of their traditional social behaviour based on the idea of magical beliefs but is an expression of their dislike for the idea of touch-pollution directed towards those who created it. Contrary attitude has been expressed by the Santals of Sorai village of Hooghly district, who consider themselves as full-fledged Hindus and avoid the Santals who arrived lately in the same village from Dumka (Santal Pargana), in marriage and food on the ground that the latter kill bullocks and buffaloes for their meat, whereas they take beef only when the animal dies.

WITCHCRAFT MURDERS IN THE DUARS

R. K. GUPTA

(Received on 28 June 1960)

RECENT enquiries have revealed that incidence of murders connected with witchcraft is heavy in the tea-growing areas of the Duars as well as in that low-lying part of Kalimpong of the District of Darjeeling which is geographically a part of the Duars. A few typical cases are given below.

(A) On 29 September, 1959, Bhakra Oraon, the Headman of Mongpong forest village, was killed by his fellow villagers in village meeting. There had been some sickness in the village and one Gopal Kharia supposed to possess the powers of an Ojha¹ called the Mandal—Headman and other villagers to a meeting in the evening. At the centre of the meeting a ceremonial fire was lit and incense was thrown in it. Gopal started trembling and going round the assembly with a stick, suddenly stopped in front of Bhakra Mondal and started beating him, saying he was responsible for causing sickness in the village through witchcraft and asking others also to join in beating him. Others did so and severely injured the Mondal, who eventually died in Siliguri hospital. On receiving this report the Police started a murder case, under Section 305 IPC read with 34 IPC.

(B) At the Kalchini Tea Estate on 6 March 1957, one Jashua Munda, son of Joseph Munda accused one Jhanjho, a

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¹ An Ojha amongst the tribes means the magician with supernatural powers, who can propitiate evil spirits, spot their familiars, cure snake-bites and prescribe medicine for the sick. He is also called 'Sokabhagat' but has been called 'Ojha' on most occasions in this article.

50-year old woman labourer in the tea estate, of being a witch. Later in the day he lay in ambush for the woman with a knife and killed her when she was returning home after a visit to her daughter. On receiving the report the Police started a case of murder under Section 302 IPC.

(C) In Jogesh Chandra Tea Estate in the Western Duars the brother of one Gandur Oraon fell sick and Gandur consulted Raghu Oraon, an Ojha. Raghu chanted a few mantras before an assembly of Oraons in the house of Gandur and fixed the responsibility for the sickness on Budhu Oraon, a 65-year old man present in the assembly who was declared by Raghu as an evil magician. Gandur was asked to assault Budhu at once, which he did, as a result of which he died. The Police, on receiving this report started a case under Section 302 IPC (Mal P. S. Case No. 13 of 23. 2. 55).

There are many other such cases, details of all of which are not necessary here. In 1954, one Shibcharan Oraon was murdered by one Jhirgu for practising witchcraft and causing the death of his daughter-in-law. (Alipurduar P. S. Case No. 15 dated 22-10-54). In the Kumai Tea Estate, Darjeeling, the wife of Likhawa Oraon was killed on 18 October 1954 for suspected witchcraft (Garubathan P. S. Case No. 1 dated 19-10-54 u/s 302 IPC). In the same district at Ging Tea Estate, Maity Gurung, a Jhakri² was himself killed by a patient suspected of being 'possessed'.

Other recorded cases are :

Sukhiapokhri P. S. Case No. 3 of 27-12-55 u/s 302 IPC

(Darjeeling).

Matelli P. S. Case No. 3 of 7-2-56 u/s 302 IPC (Jalpaiguri).

Mal. P. S. Case No. 6 of 12-3-56 u/s 302 IPC (Jalpaiguri).

Falakata P. S. Case No. 7 of 20-8-56 u/s 302 IPC

(Jalpaiguri).

² The witch doctor or the medicine-man is called 'Jhakri' by the Nepalis. Amongst the Rai-Limbu he is also called 'Bejua'. He wears in performing his rites special garb. A Jhakri occasionally enters into a contest of supernatural strength with rival Jhakris but never attacks the witch or the Boksi who is supposed to derive strength from Parvati herself. The rites of the Jhakri are called Chinta.

- Madarihat P. S. Case No. 6 of 7-12-56 u/s 302 IPC
(Jalpaiguri).
Kalachini P. S. Case No. 14 of 24-12-56 u/s 302 IPC
(Jalpaiguri).
Nagarakata P. S. Case No. 6 of 10-4-55 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Dhupguri P. S. Case No. 21 of 26-2-55 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Kalchini P. S. Case No. 8 of 7-3-57 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Kalchini P. S. Case No. 4 of 6-7-57 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Kalchini P. S. Case No. 19 of 19-6-57 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Kharibari P. S. Case No. 8 of 25-10-57 u/s 302 IPC.
(Darjeeling).
Mal P. S. Case No. 23 of 30-3-59 u/s 302 IPC. (Jalpaiguri).
Falakata P. S. Case No. 11 of 20-7-59 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Kotwali P. S. Case No. 31 of 9-11-59 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Nagarkata P. S. Case No. 2 of 12-10-59 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).
Mal P. S. Case No. 21 of 23-6-59 u/s 302 IPC. (Jalpaiguri).
Mal P. S. Case No. 4 of 4-9-59 u/s 302 IPC (Jalpaiguri).
Mal P. S. Case No. 3 of 2-2-60 u/s 302 IPC. (Jalpaiguri).
Dhupguri P. S. Case No. 11 of 18-4-60 u/s 302 IPC.
(Jalpaiguri).

Outside these areas, one case has been reported from the district of West Dinajpur—Hili P. S., Case No. 1 of 16-1-60 u/s 302 IPC. This happened among the Mundas of Gayespur village, and one Pacha was suspected to be an evil magician³ was killed at the investigation of a Sadhu whose role was identical with that of an Ojha. It should be recorded here that the details given above do not probably indicate the true extent

³ The local Bengalis believed that he derived supernatural powers from Oraon-Kali.

of the problem of murder due to witchcraft. It is extremely difficult to collect figures of such murders before 1954 as murders as offences were put in the 'Special Report'⁴ category only towards the end of 1953. Prior to this, figures are to be collected only with great effort from the Police Stations themselves. Further, even in *Specially Reported* cases, unless the Investigating Officers are aware how a tribal mind reacts to witchcraft, they might miss the motive or put in a wrong motive. Some thing like this probably happend in course of the investigation of Balurghat P. S. Case No. 9 of 20-3-60 u/s 302 IPC. (West Dinajpur). In this case, among the Poliyas, a sixty-year old woman called Chando Barmani was murdered and the investigation failed to locate the culprit. Chando was regarded by the neighbours to possess magical power through mantras and while the Investigating Officer showed entesprise by looking for a Munda or a Santal culprit (there are quite a few Santals and Mundas there) he did not look for witchcraft as a motive amongst the Poliyas. The importance of the knowledge of such tribal practices for investigating such cases is clearly shown in the article entitled "The Cult of Mohua Debi" written by Sri R. N. Nagu, IPS in the *Indian Police Journal* Vol. VI No. IV. In this case the Head Constable of Shahapur P. S. (Madhya Pradesh) was aware of the cult ; he investigated with tenacity until the murder was out. Such knowledge however is uncommon among the average Investigating Officers of Duars or Darjeeling, which probably results in witchcraft as a cause out of the investigation of quite a few murders.

II

Before these murders and their backgrounds are considered, note must be taken of the fact that almost invariably these murders have taken place in the tea gardens and the adjacent bustees inhabited mainly by Dravidian-speaking tribes like

⁴ In the Police administration, the S. P. has to send on the investigation of offences of certain categories special reports to the highest levels. These are known as 'Special Report Cases'.

the Oraon or Kolarion-speaking tribes the Munda, Kol, Kheria, Santal, etc. or others belonging to the Chotanagpur area. The other large element in the population of the Duars is formed by the Gurkhs, who are also the predominant element of population in Darjeeling. In the Duars, the Dravidian and Kolarian-speaking communities are grouped together as Modesias and the Gurkhas as PH, an abbreviated term for Paharia.

The belief in witchcraft and consequent murders is mainly confined to the Modesias. The Gurkhas in the Duars have a weaker belief in witchcraft. In the interior of Darjeeling district where the witch doctor is called a Jhakri or medicine-man, it is stronger. There also we come across witches who are called Boksis or Dankinis. But they are regarded more with awe than removed by violence. The two Darjeeling murders among the Gurkhas mentioned above show a motive and pattern quite different from that in the witchcraft murders of the Modesias.

The belief of the Dravidian-speaking group in witchcraft is similar to that of the Kolarian-speaking groups, with minor differences. It is important to examine this belief before it can be appreciated how a peace-loving tribal can work himself up into that state of frenzied terror in which he commits murders in a most brutal manner. Witchcraft with him is a 'live' thing and his attitude towards it fits in with the general thesis of James Frazer. With the primitive man everywhere the cult of sympathetic magic is powerful, and at the initial stages it is private magic in which magical rites are performed for the benefit or injury of individuals. Amongst the Modesias this cult is the cult of witchcraft.

It may be argued with some force that the witchcraft murders in the Duars amongst the Modesias are due to the conflict of the private and evil magic (which the witch practises for injury of individuals) with the public magic of the Ojhas (which they practise for the welfare of the community and to undo the influence of private witchcraft or of evil spirits in individuals). Public magic operates constantly against private magic in unscrupulous hands as the Ojhas constantly endeavour

to suppress the Dain. It is true the result often is the destruction of human life and self-aggrandisement is often a motive with the Ojha, but the community consider a witch-doctor as a public benefactor. It is not that the Ojha is always a knave or an impostor; as the tribal sorcerer he may sometimes be sincere, convinced that he really possesses wonderful powers which the credulity of his followers ascribe to him. He functions ostensibly for the welfare of the community (It will be interesting to examine his role in the numerous rites of 'rain-invocations' that took place in the tea areas from Darjeeling to Assam, early this year, when in the grip of a severe drought).

The evil magician amongst the Oraons and Mundas and others can be a man or a woman. In a case of murder that occurred in 1959 in Falakata P. S. a man Ratia Oraon was killed on suspicion that he was a 'witch'. Another case occurred in the same year in Mal P. S. Sanichara Munda, a 70-year old man, was murdered for suspected witchcraft. In 1957, in a case in Kalchini P. S. one Litu Oraon was driven into blind terror of being declared a Dain when he murdered his two children in a suicide pact. The number of female magicians also, amongst such peoples is not small.

Amongst the Santals however only women are believed to practise witchcraft. There is behind this belief a legend. Sing Bonga, the supreme deity among the Santals, asked the Santal men to come to him for initiation into witchcraft. The women overheard this, got the men drunk on the appointed day and dressing up like men appeared before Sing Bonga and received lessons in magic. The men recovering from their stupor presented themselves before the supreme deity later on. Sing Bonga then realized that he had been deceived by the Santal women and taught the men the art of countering witchcraft. Thus among the Santal now the witches or Dains are all women and the witch doctors or *jangurus* are all men. There are other interesting facets of the Santal belief in witchcraft on which considerable literature has already been written.

The Oraons call the witch doctor as *S o k a b h a g a t* or *Ojha*, and the witches both male and female as *Dains*. The *Dains* are supposed to be human familiars through whom the evil spirits or *bongas* feed on the lives of human beings (or on lives of domestic animals at times) as a result of which the victims fall ill or die. If the *Sokabhagat* is then consulted, he discovers the *Dain* with the aid of grains of rice and other magical rites. He also ascertains what particular sacrifice the *bonga* is willing to accept in order to relinquish his hold on the sick person. Sometimes the *Dains* approached by the relatives or friends of the patients and very politely requested to perform the necessary sacrifice of a black or white cock, goat or even a buffalo, the *Dain* of course providing the sacrificial victim. Refusal to comply with the demand is most dangerous as the desired end may be attained by killing the *Dain* to propitiate the *bongas*. The *Dain* is thus often murdered under exceedingly cruel circumstances. This of course is the formal pattern of witchcraft and counter witchcraft amongst the *Modesias*. Often however the formality of asking the *Dain* to sacrifice an animal to propitiate the *boega* is ignored and witch is straightaway murdered. In the cases mentioned earlier, the common methods appear to be (1) for the *Ojha* to perform his witch-hunting rites and denounce the witch before an assembly of persons who then proceed to despatch the witch, (2) for the 'wronged' party to plan and waylay the witch and murder him or her or (3) for the community to go through a 'trial' or *b i c h a r* of the witch and kill him or her.

More often than not the decision to kill is a group judgment, in most cases on the advice of the *Ojha*. In a case of murder of *Mal P. S.* in 1959, the victim, *Sanichara Munda* was brought to the house of *Shri Sachindra Ghosh*, the Head Clerk of *Batabari Tea Estate* for *bichar*. He was mercilessly beaten before he was so brought, as a result of which he died afterwards. In another case which occurred in the same year at *Jaipur Tea Estate* of *Kotwali P. S.* one finds a group of *Bhumij* suspecting the entire *Bhumij* of another labour lines as witches. In a case reported in *Kalchini P. S.* in 1957, one *Litu Oraon* said before he executed his suicide pact-

with his children that his neighbours had declared him as a witch and that he would commit suicide. The most remarkable case was the one reported in Gorubathan P. S. of Darjeeling District in 1959 (mentioned earlier in this article) in which the Ojha went into a trance, located his witch and started beating him. Others present jointly attacked the victim and killed him.

The belief that the bonga is propitiated with human life at least in one case resulted in human sacrifice. In a case of murder reported in Falakata P. S. in Jalpaiguri in 1956 a sixty-year old man, without an enemy in the world was murdered so that human blood could be offered to the tribal deity.

The group justice against the Dain often takes most brutal forms. The writer recently met a man called Sani Oraon who had, about 20 years ago, taken part in the lynching of an Oraon woman in the labour lines of Bagrakot Tea Estate of Jalpaiguri, who, of course, was suspected to be a witch. Her house was raided by a furious mob and she was trussed up in a gunny bag and thrown alive in the fast-flowing Leesh river nearby. A couple of days later some Paharia labourers under orders of the European Manager made a thorough search in the neighbourhood and recovered the woman still trussed up in gunny but alive. The writer also met the son of the Dain who had fled in terror at the time of the raid to return to his mother after she was recovered alive.

A few words about the Sokhabhagat or the Ojha will not be out of place here. He, of course, conforms to the type known to anthropologists. Like Dr Malinowsky's practitioner of magic he is usually hedged around by taboos and must refrain from eating certain foods. He lives quite often a pure private life, is neat and clean in habits, spurns alcohol and lives on vegetarian food⁵. In tracing a Dain, he quite often goes into a trance like Dr Malinowsky's magician, but also uses

⁵ Except of course the Jhakri of Nepal and Darjeeling, to whom few items of food and drink are prohibited.

tricks like *chal chalano* or *lathi chalano*⁶. After the discovery, when the Dain naturally protests he sometime takes recourse to trial by ordeal (human character being more or less similar all over the world). A senior European Manager in the Eastern Duars recently told me how a male Dain was once tried by ordeal by boiling water which only permanently damaged the right hand of the victim⁷.

III

All primitiveness must someday pass and the Modesia will someday give up his methods of throwing the witch into the river in favour of 'Purge' trials or investigation into un-Oraon activities. Nevertheless murders for witchcraft are an evil crime under the law, and from the point of view of law-enforcement it is necessary to consider how this evil can be eradicated or restricted. Ordinary murders are not considered by the law-enforcers as preventible but perhaps these murders, occurring as they do, under a set of peculiar circumstances, can be treated differently and their incidence greatly reduced. In most cases, there is no doubt that it is the Sokabhatagat or the Ojha who provokes the trouble. The Bhagat amongst the Modesias usually officiates at the community worship, sometimes at the worship of the Hindu deities in which the tribals often take part. His religious influence over the tribals is not necessarily bad, but it is only when he exercises this influence to fight witches that violence

⁶ The grains of rice also aid the Ojha amongst the more sophisticated Bengalis to catch a thief. Suspects are given rice to keep in the mouth and the person in whose mouth the rice remains dry is the culprit. Fear often dries up *saliva*. The argument is who but the guilty would show fear?

⁷ Even among Bengalis, mild forms of trial by ordeal are known and are used against the evil eye. Here in Jalpaiguri very recently a very good-looking young Brahmin girl started losing her health. The grandmother was worried and consulted another lady who advised that her friends should be put through trial by ordeal, by making them inhale burning dry chillis. If any one sneezed, she would be guilty. The trial of course was an utter failure as the fumes of burning chilli drove every one into fits of sneezing, including the grandmother. The lady who suggested the trial by ordeal was from a Vaidya family.

occurs. Sometimes he cannot help it in order to maintain his 'spiritual' supremacy and often the source of income. If a man is brought before him bitten by a snake he has to try and cure him by *m a n t r a s*, chants and songs. Likewise when a group of tribals report to him instances of apparently inexplicable cattle disease or human mortality, he has to locate the *b o n g a* and the familiar and propitiate the former by removing the latter. If he does not do that her own life is sometimes in danger. In a case of murder in Matelli P. S. in 1956 the Ojha himself was suspected of evil witchcraft and killed. In the case reported from Balurghat P. S. we have seen that the Polyia woman murdered under suspicious circumstances used *m a n t r a s* to cure.

This aspect of the Ojha's 'spiritual' service has nevertheless to be discouraged. A simple way is for the Police to find out the Ojha who provokes the murders and prosecute him as an abettor. The law of abetment as defined in the Indian Penal Code is given below.

Sec. 107. A person abets the doing of a thing, who—

First—Instigates a person to do that,

Secondly—Engages with one or more other person or persons in any conspiracy for the doing of that thing, if an act or illegal omission takes place in pursuance of that conspiracy, and in order to the doing of that thing,

Thirdly—Intentionally aids by any act or illegal omission to the doing of that thing.

Case law further goes on to say 'A person is said to "instigate" another to an act. When he actively suggests or stimulates him to the act by any means or language, direct or indirect, whether it takes the form of express solicitation or of hints, insinuation or encouragement'. Good investigation will often reveal evidence along these lines against the Ojha. The Ojha again comes under the third clause. Good investigation should often be able to show that by picking on an individual as the Dain before a murderous mob the Ojha merely facilitates the murder. In the case of Mohit Pandey (1871) 3 NWP 316, persons were held guilty of abetting suicide by only having

told the suttee that she would go to heaven. The Ojha's abetment of murder is no less direct.

If such prosecutions are launched the Bhagat will know that he will have to take responsibility for the bloody violence that might follow his pronouncement. If thus he is made aware of the legal consequences, he will perhaps think of other ways of maintaining his 'spiritual' superiority.

This alone, it must be admitted, may not eradicate the evil completely. The Ojhas have always been discouraged by some among the European planters (the rest are just not interested). The European planter who related the story mentioned above about ordeal by boiling water made the Ojha in question go through the same ordeal with boiling water. This was cruel medicine but certainly it broke the spell of the Ojha over the community. Instances are not unknown in which the Ojhas have been chased away, as soon as some European planters have discovered them, beyond the immediate neighbourhood. But such discouragement to the Ojha has not, as figures show, done much to restrict the evil. It has only made it more difficult to locate the Ojhas. It is true that in some cases the Ojha comes out openly. In the case reported in Gorubathan P. S. in 1959, the magician was the main accused in the murder case. In another case reported in Mal P. S. 1955 the Ojha, Raghu Oraon, was prosecuted for direct participation in the murder. But usually the Ojha is most reluctant to speak about his powers against a Dain and the writer in his field enquiries often came up against a wall of silence in his efforts to talk to an Ojha. But by patient investigation and with insight into the tribal mind it should not be difficult for the Police Investigator to locate the Ojha and look for evidence against him⁸.

The evil will however disappear completely only as the tribes emerge from their primitive mental state and become

⁸ And also for motive. While the acts of the Ojhas may often be subjective, motives of vengeance or other material motives should not be absolutely ruled out in some cases. In the case reported in 1959 in Gorubathan P. S. there was a suspicion that Gopal Kheria wanted to get rid of the Mondal. Police enquiries however did not reveal any evidence.

increasingly sophisticated. This will come through mental and material progress and education.

There has been amongst the Modesias little mental progress through religion and through education. The progress in setting up of schools (Junior Basic, Primary and Nursery) as shown by the statistics below is impressive.

	<i>Junior Basic</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Nursery</i>
1951	3	680	2
1952	10	695	2
1953	10	688	2
1954	13	722	2
1955	16	776	2
1956	16	798	2
1957	16	840	2
1958	21	848	2
1959	46	880	2

There has been a considerable increase in the number of higher schools. But the socio-economic organization of the plantation Modesias is of no avail so far as the deep-seated beliefs and superstitions are concerned. The Plantation Labour Force Act provides for the children of the worker from the age of 3 to 12 or when they start working on plantations, whichever is later. As the plantation worker, like the municipal sweepers, works in the plantations in families, that is, with the wife and the children, the urge to take away the child at the age of 12 from school to pluck tea is great and it is the increasing unemployment which sometimes keeps a Modesia boy at school. The Modesia child does not usually go to school before he is 7 or 8. It can be easily realized how little impact such education has on the strongly entrenched beliefs and superstitions of the tribal mind.

Nor does religion seem to have helped the Modesia much towards mental progress. A large number of them are

Christians. The 1951 Census showed that out of a total number of 178,009 nearly 25,000 were Christians. But Christianity has not brought about sufficient mental progress. One wonders if Christianity in the Duars has been strong enough to supplant the tribal pantheon of b o n g a s. The Tea District Labour Association publication on the tribals in 1924 states : 'The Oraons have taken very readily to Christianity the doctrine of one sacrifice having accomplished for all times the propitiation of the power of darkness having for them a special appeal'. This conversion however does not appear to be very deep and there appears to have been only a happy marriage between the tribal fetishes and Christian belief in which the former are easily the stronger partner. The winter once going through an Oraon m a n t r a for curing snake bite came across the following line : DHENFUL KA TAGA TAGA BRAHMA BISHNU MAHESWAR LAGA ISWAR GURU PURLAHI MAHADEO KA DOHAL. Here all the powerful gods of the Hindus are being called upon to help. The fact stand that Christianity amongst the tribals is not very significant, the Hindu influence has not made any powerful headway owing to lack of organized effort, and the mental progress of the Modesia through spiritual influence under these circumstances has been slow.

It is on material progress therefore that one will have to rely more heavily for speedier results. The pace of material progress in the last one century has quickened beyond imagination, speeding up along with it the continuous action-inter action of material progress and ideas. It is this progress which will significantly influence in future the state of the tribal mind.

IN MEMORIUM

DHIRENDRA NATH MAJUMDAR

(1903-1960)

THE sudden and unexpected death of Professor D. N. Majumdar on the 31st May, 1960, has left a profound grief in the hearts of many people. His death has been mourned all over the anthropological world. In him Asian Anthropology has lost its leader, India has lost her illustrious and patriotic son, his kins have lost a lovable relative and a large number of students including the writer of these lines, have lost their teacher, friend, and philosopher—an irreparable loss to all of us.

Professor Majumdar will be remembered in many ways. Some will remember him for his valuable writings on tribal, and urban communities which include : *A Tribe in Transition* (1931), *The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes* (1944), *The Matrix of Indian Culture* (1947), *The Affairs of a Tribe* (1950), *Races and Cultures of India* (Revised edition 1958), *Caste and Communication in an Indian Village* (1958), *Social Contours of an Industrial City* (1960) etc. Others will remember him for putting Lucknow on the anthropological map of the world, a place where he started his teaching career in the year 1927, where he continued to serve for the whole life, and where he breathed his last in full glory. Dr Majumdar's name will be written in golden letters in the history of the University of Lucknow as a founder and a builder of the department of Anthropology, which occupies a unique place among the anthropological institutions of the world.

Some, again, will remember Professor Majumdar for his honours and distinctions which he was fortunate to receive in his academic and professional fields. As early as in the year 1925 he became the Premchand Roychand Scholar and was awarded the Mouatt Gold Medal in 1927, and then in the year 1935 he was admitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Cambridge, a rare distinction in those days for an Indian scholar indeed. At a comparatively young age of 34, again, he was elected President of the Anthropology Section of the Silver Jubilee of Indian Science Congress (1937), and then after four years he was elected a Fellow of the National Institute of Sciences of India in 1941. Professor Majumdar represented India in many international conferences, lectured at several universities in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, and was also elected a Fellow of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in 1953. During the last phase of his prolific professional career (1958), he was awarded the Annandale Gold Medal for his contribution to Asian study.

Then, many will remember Professor Majumdar as the mature teacher who succeeded in building an enviable reputation for producing students spread out in the four corners of the country and who are in charge of anthropological teaching and research in one capacity or another. His indefatigable industry, his profound and wide scholarship, his fine reasoning and his excellent expression are living models for his students, which they will continue to treasure in their memory.

Professor Majumdar is dead, but he will continue to live in our memory to inspire us. The images in memories are many and diverse, but they are all images of one man, an integral man of singleness of mind and purpose who was born, lived and died for anthropology, the science of mankind.

A great scholar and a good soul, a rare combination, whom we cannot afford to forget.

L. P. VIDYARTHI

BOOK REVIEWS

Tribe, Caste, and Nation : A Study of Political Activity and Political Change in Highland Orissa. By F. G. Bailey, *Lecturer in Asian Anthropology in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 1960. Manchester University Press. Pp. xii + 279. 35 shillings.

Three years ago, Mr F. G. Bailey published a book entitled *Caste and the Economic Frontier*. This was an analysis of social life in a village in Orissa. He tried to show how economic changes, among other things, were bringing about changes in the relationship between different castes. This may of course sound like nothing new, yet the care and precision with which Mr Bailey observed and analysed the situation in one particular village lifted his book above the commonplace.

Mr Bailey's present book is a kind of continuation of his previous work. He has shifted the scene to a neighbouring village where the population is largely 'tribal', and which has not been subject to the same influences as in Bisipara, the previous one. It strikes one that the analysis has been carried to a greater depth and a realistic picture has emerged of how several types of social structures happen to exist side by side, and how the particular type of cultural change results from a kind of choice which the individual or group brings into operation at the critical moment.

Mr Bailey's chief contribution perhaps lies in the fact that he shows how such a selection is largely determined by the desire to gain more power, either over men or over resources. Theoretically, this comes close to an economic interpretation, but the view is tempered by a recognition of the freedom which individuals and groups may yet bring into play under the limitations set by history.

The book has indeed succeeded in producing a very realistic picture of caste in operation in one part of India ; and of the way in which a tribe moves slowly in the direction of integration into a larger society. From several points of view, Mr Bailey's book may be regarded as one of outstanding studies in modern Indian social anthropology.

Nirmal Kumar Bose

The Evolution of Culture : The Development of Civilisation to the Fall of Rome. By Leslie A. White. 1959. McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc. New York. Pp. xii + 378.

Professor Leslie A. White has written a combative book in order to re-establish the theory of evolution in terms originally outlined by Morgan or Tylor. Anti-evolutionism as subscribed to by the followers of Boas, Malinowsky or members of the Culture-Historical School of Schmidt or Koppers was, he believes, intended 'to make the world safe for private property'. It is 'perfectly clear that in opposing the theory of primitive communism they (Schmidt and Koppers) are trying to undermine the socialist doctrines of Marx, Engels, Bebel and others' (p. 256).

In Professor White's opinion this has led anthropology into wrong paths when explanations are finally sought in terms of 'instincts, drives, psychic mechanisms, etc. not to mention free will and God Almighty' (p. 207). Instead, one should 'treat human societies in the same attitude with which a physicist regards nebulae, stars and atoms : as natural phenomena.... explanation will consist in ascertaining the properties of things, in the observation of events, and in the formation of generalizations or universals that will embrace the particulars' (p. 208).

In the quest, the author has discarded the view that processes of culture change, for instance, can be explained biologically (p. 213). This is a kind of 'animism'. He therefore favours a mechanistic explanation which brings anthropology close to the physical sciences. 'An interpretation of human social organization and evolution in terms of principles cosmic in scope must be more fundamental and significant, than an interpretation limited to human society itself' (p. 147).

As an example of such an endeavour, we may be permitted to present a longish quotation : 'A society is a material system, an organization of material bodies. This is true whether we are dealing with oak trees, fungi, bacteria, sponges, ants, bears, baboons, or man. And the question "what holds systems together ?" is as fundamental to sociology as it is to biology, chemistry, and physics. A force, one might say, relatively weak in loose-knit societies, but powerful in highly integrated groups, holds living material bodies together. We have no name for this force unless we call it solidarity. In physics it is called gravitation in the

realm of large bodies, attraction on the level of the minute, what its name, if any, is in biology we do not know.

'In primate societies the attraction between individuals is very strong. All primates live, so to speak, in a powerful gravitational field which not only unites them into a system, but which makes life apart from the system all but impossible. Apes and men alike normally die of loneliness in isolation. Solitary confinement is one of the most severe forms of penal discipline. In human societies individuals may give their lives for the group. The "social gravitational force" is thus stronger even than that of life itself' (pp. 206-7).

Prof. White has tried to cover the whole range of human culture under this scheme of explanation. He has ably defended the evolutionary doctrine of Morgan, and frequently shown how the latter was often misunderstood or misinterpreted. To that extent, the book provides stimulating reading. But in the application of his 'mechanistic' explanation, he has at times tended to be doctrinaire. Thus the Arunta and Kariera have approximately the same type of productive system, yet their socio-cultural systems show wide variance. Prof. White says in this connection that 'The Arunta system has been presented here as a higher stage of social evolution than that of the Kariera, as indeed it is. This evolutionary advance was brought about by changes in the conditions of life; of this we may be sure: the alternatives to this view are free will and caprice, which are inadmissible as explanatory concepts in sciences. Unfortunately, however, we do not know specifically and in detail what the "changes in the conditions of life" were in this case..... the conditions of subsistence may have been quite different. And the relations, in terms of offence and defence, with neighbouring tribes may have been different also. The application of our general theory of social evolution to this particular instance would be more convincing if we could support it with technological and ecological data. But the absence of such information in no way invalidates our theory' (pp. 174-5).

If Functionalists or Historical Schools of the American or Austrian varieties have overdone one kind of explanation, it is eminently desirable that an alternative view should be put forward in emphatic terms as a counterpoise. Professor White's writings in general may be looked upon as a swing-back in that

direction. Such a development is both healthy as well as necessary in the interests of anthropological theory. But this is far from saying that a mechanistic explanation presented here is necessarily more satisfying because it falls in line with the 'non-animistic, impersonal' explanations offered in physics.

Was Einstein himself so sure that that explanation had really 'succeeded' in physics, although one will not question the fact that it has, up to now, 'succeeded' admirably in so far as technological dividends are concerned.

Nirmal Kumar Bose

Slavery in India. By Amal Kumar Chattopadhyay, Calcutta, Nagarjun Press. Price Rs. 10.

In this small book the author has traced the history of slavery in India and its vestiges in the present day. In ancient India slaves were made of the captives of war. The duties of slaves were many and various, both in the homes and outside. In the Moslem period, besides the captives of war, slaves were made of criminals, and kidnapped persons of other religions. They were made to work more in the house than in the fields.

In Portuguese India slavery was a profitable trade, and Indian slave women were used as brides of the Portuguese colonists. Warren Hastings encouraged slavery during his tenure of office. Europeans used to sell their slaves before they went back to Europe, and there were 'slave warehouses' in many parts of Calcutta. Slavery was abolished in India and throughout the British Empire in 1833 by an Act of Parliament.

At the end of the book the author has likened labour in indigo, and tea gardens to slavery. There is, however, much difference between indentured or contractual labour and slavery. Also traffic in women in the present day is not the same as slavery. The author has made a significant contribution by tracing the history of slavery in India, but his writing is seriously hampered by his moralistic attitude on the subject.

Jyotirmoyee Sarma

Chisungu—A Girl's Initiation Ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia. By Audrey I. Richards. P.p. 224, with plates and diagrams. 1956. Faber & Faber Limited, London. 42 shillings.

This is a monograph on the female initiation rites of a people whose economic, political, and kinship systems have been described

more or less fully by the author in a number of earlier works. The importance of female initiation rites among the Bemba is understandable, for they are a matrilineal people. The chisungu ceremonies consist of a series of rites, being one of the three most important sets of rituals in Bemba society. They are, however, rapidly dying out, and by now perhaps they have ceased to exist. In former times a single chisungu might continue for as long as six months. The only chisungu which the author observed (in 1931) and recorded in detail lasted for over a month.

The book is divided into three parts, dealing successively with the cultural setting, the ceremony, and the interpretation of the ceremony. The cultural setting is described in terms of ideology and dogma on the one hand, and social structure on the other. Both are of importance to the understanding of the ceremony, for 'ideology and dogma' explain its ritual idiom, and 'structure' tells us why particular people interact in the way in which they do. The nature of the marriage contract is also explained, for the ceremony was at one time a necessary pre-condition for marriage which usually followed immediately after.

'The Bemba chisungu is an individual nubility rite practised for each girl, or for two or three girls together and preceded by a short puberty ceremony proper' (p. 54). The actors in the ceremony include the owner of the ceremony (usually one of the parents), the mistress of the ceremony (a ritual specialist), the messenger, the candidates and their grooms, and the relatives of the bride, among whom the father's sister plays an important part. The chisungu includes much dancing and singing, and some of these, as well as certain drum beats are peculiar to the ceremony. There are, besides, 'mimes representing domestic and agricultural life' (p. 59). Certain secret emblems—clay figures and geometrical designs on the walls—are also made for the ceremony, and these are of great ritual importance.

The description of the ceremony is detailed, and somewhat lengthy. The author herself was frequently bored with the proceedings, and once or twice tried to persuade the mistress of ceremonies to hurry things through. The monotonous succession of dancing, singing and beer-drinking, punctuated by stereotyped ordeals for the neophytes, does not indeed make very lively reading. Full details are given, however, for the author feels that the

material which might be of use to a number of people would otherwise be lost. One wonders whether it would not have been more profitable to have a separation between documentary and analytical works.

The interpretation of the ceremony is in the grand functional manner, and is worthy of one of Malinowsky's few surviving disciples. The author first discusses the available methods of interpretation. First of all, there are certain *expressed* or *formulated* purposes of the rite, and such purposes may be elicited by direct enquiry. Secondly, there are certain deduced purposes which it is the objective of scientific analysis to lay bare. The distinction between *expressed* and *deduced* purposes corresponds, though not exactly, with Merton's manifest and latent functions. Finally, the rite has certain pragmatic effects which are not always consciously realized.

Much like Malinowsky himself, the author ignores the necessity of giving a precise definition to her concept of function. One looks in vain to see whether *function* and *purpose* have been clearly differentiated. However, the author is far from naive in her application of the functional model. For instance, she is not satisfied merely by saying that a trait exists because it has a function. She is conscious of the need to explain both integration and conflict, and the latter is rightly recognized as an integral part of the system.

Andre Beteille

Economic Development and Tribal Change—A Study of Immigrant Labour in Buganda. Edited by Audrey I. Richards. Pp. XV + 301, with tables, maps and plates. W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., Cambridge. n. d. 30 shillings.

This is a report 'of a study of immigrant labour in Uganda carried out by the East Africa Institute of Social Research during 1950 and 1951 at the request of the Government of Uganda' (p. ix). Besides those who have contributed to the volume in writing, the efforts of many others have gone both into the design of the survey as well as its execution. The major part of the writing has been done by the editor who has contributed to six out of the nine chapters. As the Director of the E. A. I. S. R. she was also responsible for planning and supervising the surveys.

After carefully considering various factors it was decided to confine the study almost exclusively to the province of Buganda. The main questions which the study was designed to answer related to the causes of migration into Buganda, the nature of employment in which the immigrants engaged, their period of stay in the province, and the extent of their incorporation into its social structure. A separate chapter is devoted to Alur migrants who were studied both in Buganda and in their home country.

The problem in Buganda is not a local one, although it has certain distinctive features. The most important of these is that the majority of the immigrants seek employment in farms owned by Africans themselves. This naturally creates social and political problems of a somewhat different nature from those in other parts of Africa where tribal migrants come to seek employment in plantations or industries controlled by the white man. It has also to be remembered that Buganda had a powerful political organization even before the Europeans came.

The problem of Buganda is, understandably, a complex one. It is not simply an economic problem as some of those interested in underdeveloped countries may be tempted to believe. Nevertheless, it is of primary importance to understand the broad economic forces which bring about the movements of population so characteristic of Africa to-day. It is also important to understand the history of each particular region, for the conditions of development are partly local and partly general. The history of migration in Uganda with its underlying economic causes has been traced admirably in a chapter by P. G. Powesland.

Economic development is a many-sided process. In Buganda, however, it has not expressed itself in the growth of industry but rather in the production of cotton, etc. for commercial purposes. The labour for this is supplied by immigrants from adjoining areas, particularly from Ruanda-Urundi. The land on which cotton is grown is held mainly by the local people who are, however, averse to engaging in agricultural labour. The immigrants who come to do this work do not find it very difficult, after some years, to buy up a little land and then to engage independently in production for commercial purposes. The Buganda are jealous of their rights in their own country. Yet they realize that unless they engage

directly in the work of production, or unless the land laws are radically changed they will become a minority in their own land.

A sociologist, or a social anthropologist has naturally a more inclusive view of development than the economist. For the latter it may be easy enough to measure development in terms of the goods produced, or of the rise in the national income. The sociologist can not be satisfied with one single criterion of development. A rise in the national income may mean very little if this income is not distributed in a satisfactory manner. This question is particularly relevant to African societies which have hitherto been more or less unstratified. The problem of development is a complex one, involving law, religion and morals, and when it is brought about through the meeting of peoples with diverse social backgrounds its evaluation becomes a very difficult task indeed.

A question which is raised by the title of the book is to what extent these complex African societies can still be characterized as tribal. In Buganda to-day we find peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds interacting in a complex system of production which is very far removed from a subsistence economy. It would be a great mistake to consider the population of Buganda a homogenous one. Those who fail to recognize the complex nature of African society to-day will make very little progress in the solution of its problems.

Andre Beteille

Pictorial History of Philosophy. By Dogovert D. Runes. Pp. x+406. *Philosophical Library, New York.* 1959. \$15.00.

The book does not attempt to give a coherent account of the development of philosophy from its origins. Rather, it introduces to the reader the great thinkers of the world with brief biographical sketches. The texts are copiously illustrated with excellent photographic reproductions. The biographies have been classified mainly on the basis of nationality. A rather liberal meaning has been given to the term philosopher so as to include, among others, the physicist de Broglie and the Roman Catholic poet Claudel.

Andre Beteille

International Bibliography of Social and Cultural Anthropology—
Vol. I. Pp. 259. U. N. E. S. C. O., Paris. 1958. \$5.50.

This is a very comprehensive bibliography, covering or attempting to cover all books, articles and periodicals published during

1955 in all countries and all languages. Such publications, if issued every year, will naturally be of immense benefit to the specialist. The bibliography is arranged in ten sections, and in two languages, English and French. Andere Beteille

Village India—Studies in the Little Community. *Edited by McKim Marriott. Pp. xix + 269. The University of Chicago Press. 1955. \$4.50.*

This work is one of a series on Comparative Studies of Cultures and Civilizations. It contains contributions from one Indian and seven foreign anthropologists, mostly field studies of particular village communities. Most of the studies show a very high standard of research. One hopes that more such studies will follow, and that Indian scientists in particular will benefit from the stimulus provided by their foreign colleagues. Andre Beteille

Folkways. *By William Graham Sumner. Dover Publications, Inc. New York, 1959. \$2.49 net.*

Folkways, as the title itself suggests, is a fascinating work.

Cultures, whether called higher or lower have come out of primitive cultures. This still persists here and there, in the form of strange and queer customs and behaviours.

We are given a clear and illustrative explanation of these customs and behaviours. Such customs should be studied in respect of their own standard and not by other standards. Therefore what is good according to the standard of primitive culture may be inconsistent with the norms of a higher culture. This is the way of life of primitive people, formulated according to their own convenience and usage.

The present work is a sociological classic and a masterpiece by Sumner. J. V. Francis

Traditional India : Structure and Change. *Edited by Milton Singer, Special Series Vol. X. American Folklore Society, Philadelphia 1959.*

This book is the outcome of a symposium on Indian culture and its change. Several scholars both Indian and foreign contributed papers with scientific insight on various aspects of Indian culture i.e., the social organization of tradition, culture performance and culture media and some problems and processes of culture change.

The book has been structured within the framework of Redfield's concept 'the great tradition and little tradition'. Thus the book is very helpful for the comprehensive understanding of Indian cultures and change in the context of the above concept. The articles seriated in this volume form a fine link which provide a pleasant vista of scientific thought of the Indian way of life. Of course, this book may not be very helpful to laymen, but for social scientists it provides a further probing into the subjects.

Milton Singer in his article entitled 'The great tradition in metropolitan centre : Madras' scholastically views the structure and process in the realm of the two traditions—the great tradition and the little tradition : the folk urban continuum. The characteristic of great tradition—sacred geography, sacred performance and sacred specialists—the literati have well been seen in the metropolitan city like Madras with the proper combination of synchronic and diachronic studies. He raises some questions as to how the process of urbanization merges with the great tradition and little tradition and the process and media by which the folk-urban continuum exists as a link between the two. Firstly, the paper radiates the demographic pattern in the context of caste, creed, occupation and population in a historical perspective to assess the growth of urbanization and secondly the localization of the great tradition in the sacred geography and in social structure is visualized. Thirdly, the cultural performance is looked at from the point of view of the great tradition. Moreover the article gives three dimensional view in the understanding of the concept the great and little tradition, the process of urbanization in a metropolitan city like Madras and a south Brahminical way of life under their urbanized condition—an ever running force of the city.

In this way all the articles in this book have unique value towards the understanding of traditional Indian : structure and change.

K. Kerketa

The Foundations of Indian Culture. By Sri Aurobindo. Pp. 450. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Paper Rs. 6.00. Cloth Rs. 7.00.

The book brings together several articles related to the same general subject : the problem of Indian culture. It was worthwhile to rescue these articles which originally appeared in the *Arya* between the years 1918 and 1921 and to print an Indian edition of

them. There is in these pages much that is good and beautiful and well said. The book would have gained, no doubt, if it had been written in a more dispassionate manner. The controversial tone, legitimate enough forty years ago, does not enhance the value of the book. But this could hardly be remedied, considering it is a reprint of articles but slightly revised. After all, who is this Mr William Archer against whom the writing was originally directed? Who remembers him? Is not it doing him too much honour? But apart from the tone of the book, it is a valuable statement of facts by which India can legitimately lay claim to a distinctive and rich culture of her own.

In the first part are considerations, interesting and stimulating if a bit repetitious, on the rhythm, the rise and fall of civilizations. East and West, with reference to what is the highest and life-giving factor in them : the spiritual element. What other civilizations have achieved must serve as a fillip to India to achieve her own highest, and not to despair, nor to copy simply, but to be her best self. In a chapter on 'Indian Polity', some paragraphs express very well what is characteristic of, and proper to, India ; as when the author shows how it was the role of the Rishis to put the religious stamp on political institutions. And in later ages we find the Brahmanic school of legists attributing their codes, though in themselves only formulations of existing rule and customs, to the ancient Rishis. Various political institutions and systems have succeeded one another, yet in all of them more stress is placed on duty than on rights ; and law is held sacred. 'A greater sovereign than the king was the *Dharma*, the religious, ethical, social, political, juridic and customary law originally governing the life of the people, This impersonal authority was considered sacred and eternal.'

Of course, Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas and Upanishads is one among several, one that not all historians will share. It has the merit of showing the unity that can be found in the evolution of Indian religions and the fact that religion is the soul of Indian culture.

The chapters on 'Religion and Spirituality', on 'Indian Art' and on 'Indian Literature' are also full of interesting facts and considerations that lead to the conclusion, well warranted, that there was and is, such a thing as a distinctly Indian culture, a culture that can creditably sustain comparison with other ancient cultures. One

might have wished that the distinctive Indian contribution to world culture had been shown more clearly.

The original articles were not devoid of prophetic insight, and certain paragraphs give us a picture of present day reality that could be only conjectured forty years ago. Aurobindo writes with feeling and eloquence and at all times tries to be fair and objective ; though occasionally reading his own views in the 'Indian' mind. Proud as he is—and well may he be—of ancient Indian culture, he is not a man to believe in splendid isolation. The last chapter, 'Indian Culture and External Influence', shows that India can adopt what is good in other cultures without losing her own soul, without denying her own deeper self, but rather assimilating it for the 'creation of a new and greater India'. These are the concluding words of the book, and they express the vision that was in the mind of the author, the great Aurobindo.

F. E.

Imagerie Populaire Vietnamienne. *par M. Durand. Publications de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient. Vol. XLVII. Paris. 1960.*

The Vietnam people apparently love to celebrate their New Year with bright-coloured pictures which every year at the season are found in the market in abundant supply. The present book deals with the Vietnamese popular production and use of images and pictures for great festive occasions. The largest part of the volume (over 500 pages) is made up of photographs of a wide selection of these popular pictures. The author makes a study of this representative collection. The pictures fall into different categories : (1) some are definitely religious ; (2) some are historical ; (3) others educational ; (4) others humorous or satirical ; (5) some serve as greeting cards ; and (6) lastly some apparently are used as magical spells. Each picture is accompanied by a brief explanation or a commentary.

In the introduction, M. Durand briefly explains symbolism of different plants, flowers and animals that enter into the composition of the scenes pictured. The interest of these pictures, as our author remarks, does not lie in their artistic quality, for they are just popular productions, but in the fact that they reveal the soul or spirit and the character of the nation as they have been moulded by its beliefs, its literature, its history. Even though these popular pictures seem to betray some Chinese influence, they are none the less genuinely Vietnamese.

Interesting as these photographs undoubtedly are, yet being in black and white only, we miss something of the bright originals. Still, for students of comparative folklore, this album will be of interest.

F. E.

Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient—Tome XLIX, Fasc. 2 Pp. 359-752, Paris, 1959.

The last Fascicle of volume 49 was reviewed here in an earlier issue. This 2nd part of vol. 49 of the E. F. E. O. contains half a dozen studies of varying length. Some of these may be of interest to Indian readers.

Mr Robert Heine-Geldern gives us a study of an obscure period (from 5th cent. onward) of history of the 'P'i-k'ien' country in North Sumatra, revealing traces of deep Indian religious influences, in particular a mixture of Buddhist and Sivaite influences, with Tantric elements. No archaeological finds have been made so far; but then no one has yet undertaken any systematic search for them. We do not know yet the full extent of the influence that Hinduism and Buddhism have exerted in the Far East countries in the remote past. It is surprising how often one finds traces of this influence when one begins to scratch the ground and the old cultures of the countries east of India and Burma.

To the trained eye a flight over southern Indo-China reveals in various places circular enclosures made of earth. They are of various sizes, some up to 300 metres diameter. It is not clear yet what purpose they served: were they enclosures for small villages? or pens for cattle? or burial grounds? Nor is it possible to date them exactly. Mr L. Malleret illustrates his study with a number of aerial photographs.

Mr G. Terral-Martini analyses a *Jataka*, sc. '*Velamajataka*' of which a clay tablet illustration can be seen in the pagoda of Pagan (Burma). This *Jataka* is not found in the Burmese canonical collection numbering 547. However the elements of the story are not new, but seem to have been borrowed from ancient Buddhist literature. It may well have belonged to a more ancient collection than the now classical one.

Mr Pierre Dupont writes a note about Buddhist statues of the Amarāvati period in South-East Asia (i.e. Vietnam, Siam and

Indonesia), which betray influences of Ceylonese (Hinayana) Buddhism at an early date (5th-6th cent. A. D.)

The volume under review contains several more valuable articles, among others a brief note by M. Boechari on *linga* and its inscription found in Indonesia : a short anthropological study of the Sam Sam population of Malay (both Buddhist and Muslim) ; and a long list of vernacular names of plants of Laos, established by Mr J. Vidal ; not to mention the scholarly recension of books, thus maintaining the high standard of the E. F. E. O. series.

F. E.

L'archeologie Mone de Dvaravati, par Pierre Dupont—Vol. XLI Paris—1959 ; *Publications de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient*.

Mrs P. Dupont has given us a learned volume on the Mone Archaeology of Dvaravati, prepared by her husband who was prevented by death from putting the last touches to, and correcting the proofs of his book.

This vol. XLI is published in two parts : Part I—Text & Maps (Pp. 330) and Part II—183 pages of photographs.

The volume under review deals with the archaeology of the Mone civilization found South Siam ; the dating of the early historical period of Siam, called the Dvaravati period, going roughly from the 7th to the 12th centuries. The 'Small Vehicle' or Hinayana Buddhism predominates ; and Pali is the religious language. Starting from the archaeological finds of the Mone region, and with the help of a Buddhist text originating in lower Burma, where there is also a pocket of Mone civilization, the author tries to present the characteristics of Mone culture.

Extensive excavations were carried out in the years 1130-1940 at Nak' o Pathom (South Siam) which brought to light hundreds of statues and fragments and objects of interest. These finds reveal a deep influence of Indian civilization. The language of the Mone people was allied to Khmer. The Mone culture has exercised a great influence in Siam and even in neighbouring Burma. However, this latter region has left relatively few archaeological and epigraphical remnants of its Mone cultural heyday. In Siam, on the other hand, more archaeological and epigraphical evidence of the Mone civilization have been discovered, which seems to point to the fact that at one time Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism and the use of Sanskrit had imposed themselves, only to disappear and leave

the field to Hinayana Buddhism with Pali as its religious language. A number of statues of Buddha (not Bodhisattvas) have been unearthed ; also a few specimens of the *linga* and of Vishnu.

Part I of this volume gives a detailed description of the site of the excavations undertaken in South Siam and of all the finds. It makes also a comparative study of the material brought to light. The companion volume, i.e. Part II, is made up of photographs, 542 in number, illustrating Part I.

The work is done with great care and thoroughness and should prove very helpful to all those interested in this particular ancient period of South Asian history and civilization. Indian scholars in particular will be interested in studying this clear evidence of the spread of ancient Indian civilization and religions. These two volumes do honour to the 'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient' and its band of scholars.

F. E.

Technique et Pantheon des Mediums Vietnamiens—*par Maurice Durand Publications de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, Vol. XLV. Paris, 1959. Pp. 304.*

The French School of Far East Studies has been publishing every year one or two solid volumes of special studies : historical, linguistic, ethnographic etc. about Indo-China and neighbouring countries. The present volume is a careful study, with texts, by Maurice Durand, on the technique and the pantheon of spiritualists in Vietnam. As he notes, besides the great religions, namely, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, there is found also the cult of a great number of powerful genii with whom mortals can communicate through the intermediary of 'mediums', mostly female, of whom the spirits take possession in the course of special religious ceremonies. When in trance, like the 'Pythoress', they answer the queries of their votaries, foretell the future, grant their requests, heal their ailments, exorcise those possessed by evil spirit. It is an interesting study for those interested in comparative ethnology and religion.

Besides a few coloured plates, the volume contains 76 full-page photographs showing the different stages in the mediumnistic ceremonies. In the last part we are given 24 hymns addressed to different divinities, sung by the mediums : first in QUOC-NGU text and then in NOM script. There are not a few similarities with, perhaps traces of, ancient Indian mythologies.

F. E.

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